Mapping the Flow of Goods: Marketplaces in Colonial Mizoram

Project Report on Completion of Post-Doctoral Research under University Grants Commission's Post-Doctoral Fellowship for SC/ST-2014-15

Submitted by

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Dr. S. Thangboi Zou

DECLARATION

This final report of Post-Doctoral Fellowship Project, under ***UGC-Post-Doctoral Fellowship for SC/ST-2014-15*** *[PDFSS-2014-15-ST-MAN-9283]* with a topic titled ***'Mapping the Flow of Goods: Marketplaces in Colonial Mizoram',*** is an original work done by me from 9th April 2015 to 8th April 2020 (5-years duration) under the supervision of Dr. David Vumlallian Zou, Assistant Professor, in the Department of History, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Delhi. This project report or any part thereof has not been submitted elsewhere for the award of degree or diploma to the best of my knowledge and belief.

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CERTIFICATE OF POST-DOCTORAL PROJECT COMPLETION

This is to certify that Dr. S. THANGBOI ZOU, a Post-Doctoral Fellow under University Grant Commission's *Post-Doctoral Fellowship for SC/ST-2014-15* with Award letter number PDFSS-2014-15-ST-MAN-9283, has completed and submitted his PDF project titled, ***Mapping the Flow of Goods: Marketplaces in Colonial Mizoram,*** in the Department of History, University of Delhi on the 1st of September, 2020 Anno Domini.

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Chapter 1
Introduction

1.1 General Concept

Economic and historical geographies converged in the history of pre- and colonial Lushai Hills (present Mizoram). This study mainly deals in the economic and commercial geography in the sense of market and movement. Market in this context comprises mainly of commodity markets. Natural based commodities like rubber and ivory and agricultural based commodities such as rice and cotton are the main themes of studying trade in this project. Moreover, the study in commodities follows chronological order — rubber, rice and cotton markets. Movement also plays an important role in the sense of transport of goods in this study. Two main modes of transport are examined here—river transport and road transport—which differ in phases. Whereas the role of river transport (or river-way) is highlighted in rubber markets, the importance of roadway has been witnessed in rice markets. The cotton market and trade support the evidences of commodity movements in and outside the Lushai hills. This study is all about the history of markets and movements of commodities in the before and after British conquest of the Lushai hills.

For trade to occur, several fundamental conditions such as availability of commodities, transferability or transport infrastructure, transaction capacity or the rule of law should be met after which the outcome of transaction would results in a flow of goods or capital (Rodrique et.al 2013). Market involves economic analysis while market-place necessarily refers to geographical implication or study of economic activities known precisely as economic geography. In a strict sense of discipline, economic geography, as Leong (1973:xxvi) defines, is concerned with "man and his natural resources," which indicates the way in which land, sea, minerals, forests, etc. are used varies very much around the world due to variation of human numbers, human types and stages of development of different human groups.

On the other hand, Commercial geography deals with the spatial characteristics of trade and transactions in terms of their nature, causes and consequences. Trade, in terms of its origins and destinations, has a spatial logic. As Dalton suggests, economic and market

phenomena becomes almost a practical requirement with new society and its way of life which emerged from the throes of the Industrial Revolution. Humanity's ultimate dependence on nature and his fellows for the means of his survival was put under the control of a 'new-fangled institutional creation', i.e. the market, which developed "from lowly beginnings" (Dalton, 1967:9). 'Market' in economic anthropology is always used to mean 'market-place', an actual site wherein goods change hands by purchase and sale (Dalton 1961:14).[1]

Mobility is fundamental to economic and social activities, including commuting. Each movement has an origin, a potential set of intermediate locations, a destination, and a nature which is linked with geographical attributes. Movement of goods and service, according to economic geographers, is an intrinsic feature of all economies. Even the unspecified production of agricultural commodities within a spatially restricted subsistence economy involves movement. It is also stated that "economically induced interactions" are nothing but one of the major subset of "human interaction" (Hodder et.al. 1974:103-104). With regard to this, Roth et.al (1978:Lxxx) described market as *"Gemeinschhaft"* based on social action and *"Vergesellchaftung"* through exchange. Hodder (p.137) explained that markets are "not the starting point of trade but rather the result of long-distance trading" due to the "division of labour and the variable locations of geographical goods".

1.2 Literature Review

Classical Economists on Trade

Adam Smith's (1976) *Wealth of Nations* rightly links the origins of the market with the division of labour which results from "a certain propensity in human nature … to exchange one thing for another." In other words, the market is deep seated in human nature or psychology. The process of exchange takes place in markets and can be conducted only when a price mechanism has been set up and agreed on between buyer and seller. Of course, the capitalist market produced by 19th century Industrial Revolution was qualitatively a new; but market as such is not new phenomenon. According to Smith, individual exchange in the marketplace inexorably leads to the greatest good for society (Krueger 2003:xvii).

[1] Dalton, George (1961): Economic Theory and Primitive Society, *American Anthropologist*-63.

Adam Smith further stated that the division of labour is limited by the extent of the market (Smith 1976:34). Market is the key to specialization and an arena of competition. It is the growth of the market that facilitates both the emergence of new production methods and the growth of the firms and industries that exploit these methods. The market does not just allocate resources—it stimulates innovation too. The Whiggish economic liberals have argued that the dominance of the market represents the "end of history."

Free trade and market is one in which the state authority does not impose any kind of restriction upon free exchange of goods and services between trading partners. Adam Ricardo (1983:133) suggests that under the system of free commerce, both parties (trading nations) naturally devote their capital and labour to such employment as are most beneficial to each. The pursuit of individual advantage by trading would result in the universal good of the whole. The role of government in free atmosphere of trade, according to Friedman (1962:27), is to do something that the market cannot do for itself such as to determine, arbitrate, and enforce the rules of the game, maintain law and order to prevent coercion of one individual by another and others that facilitate free operation of markets and trading. Restriction of trade and imposition of stringent rules and regulation are not conducive to free market and trade.

Karl Polanyi—Exchange as a 'Principle of Reciprocity'

Karl Polanyi (1944) in his monumental work *'The Great Transformation'* defines market-place as a meeting place for the purpose of barter or buying and selling, and further stresses that unless such a pattern of meeting place is present, at least in patches, the propensity to exchange goods will fine no sufficient scope (p.59). He further describes that market pattern is related to specific motive of its own, i.e. the motive to barter or truck which has become an institution viz. market (p.60). More importantly, economic system of the market determines the whole organisation of society: "instead of economy being embedded in social relations, social relations are embedded in the economic system" (p. 60). There is an essential relation between society and market, according to Polanyi. According to him, long distance trade engenders markets or market-places –an institutions which involves acts of barter or use of money. On the other side, he downplayed the role of barter on the origin of trade and believed in the 'principle of Reciprocity' (Polanyi 1944:61-62).

In overall Polanyi's theories attempted to explain human economic activities not in the market oriented motive, but tried to show them as a form of mutual exchanges traditionally held and practised by mankind, that was embedded in societies. Polanyi's scheme is in opposition to classical economists' point of view that hold economy and market as a mutual exchange in trying to fulfil personal needs, interest and gain. In pursuing self-interest, man has choices and definitely chooses that give maximum satisfaction for him and the also the society as a whole.

The Bazaar and 'Haats' in Asia and South West Asia

Anand Yang (1999) made a wide research on the market places and its mechanisms in the colonial northern India and published his works titled Bazaar India: Markets, Society, and the Colonial State in Bihar**.** He discusses at length about the role of rivers in facilitating trades in Bihar and its surrounding areas especially Bengal. Trade had been facilitated to and from Bihar and Bengal. Ganges served as a "channel" for trade –linking places. Gandak, a tributary of Ganges was the principal artery of trade (p.28). The Ganges and its affluent constituted the most effective and efficient network of transportation. Yang also pointed out that rivers were the primary highways, a natural system of internal waterways, because roads were not well developed until the late nineteenth century (p.31).

On his take on marketplace or bazaar, he describes Bazaars as "historical text of social, political, economic, and cultural worlds" (p. 3). In his book, he is looking for ways to 'represent the bazaar in history, to construct its narrative history, and to find out voice to present it' (p.3). He stresses about the 'interplay of the market, power and modes of production; colonial state and its effects on peasant society'. He also observes bazaar as the centre of colonial involvement in economic and social domains of the Indian villages (p.8); bazaar as the locus of (political) conflict during the Gandhian era, a hybrid place, and a fusion of the political with the social and economic agenda (p.165). He wrote:

> The dynamics of the local marketing system reveals that markets were units of social and political organisation within which power and influence were wielded and contested; not just by the power of colonial state, but also articulated by local controllers and elites (Yang:166).

Yang considered '*haat* or periodic market' as the lowest level of market (p.15). He also gave emphasis on 'mapping the spatial aspects of human landscape as patterned by markets or looking markets as economic phenomena; reconstructing and narrating the lived experiences of peoples as played out in the backdrop of markets'. He observed that relationship evolved between the colonial state and indigenous society as mediated through the local marketing system (p.16). He regards market as the "epitome of a spatial boundary", a "space where local society materially and culturally reproduced itself" (c.f. p.16). Therefore, he infers that bazaar reflects our 'imaginative geography of the agrarian society, and speaks a language of exchange and negotiation, of movement or flow, of circulation and redistribution' (p.16).

Alfred Gell (1986) made an in-depth study on the socio-economic life of the Muria communities of Bastar in India. He concentrated on the circulation of commodities in social life and the extent to which it surged the social status of persons wherein he identified that the Muria have "created nothing in material sense, except a landscape and a market"(p.139). However, he clarified beforehand that the market's goods was supplied by other groups. The relationship between 'economy' and society, in this context, was so great that Appadurai (1986:3) expressed: "commodities, like persons, have social lives".

Kleden (2011) examines how bazaar-economy as traditional trading behaviour influences the economic development of an area, by studying the bazaar economy in Indonesia. To this end, Alfred Gell (1986:15) had identified that bazaar settings are "likely to encourage commodity flows as domestic setting may not". He therefore inferred that "a commoditization lies at the complex intersection of temporal, cultural and social factors". He further defined commodity situation in the social life of any "thing" as the situation in which its exchangeability (past, present or future) for some other thing is its socially relevant feature (p.13). Roth and Wittich (1978) also linked market, in early history, with "kinship' or "tribal" identities, in which "peaceful relationship of men" could be found (p.1xxx). Roth further stressed that the community of the market is the most impersonal group who struggle, if they ever do, which is only oriented merely to actual or potential exchanges.

Cliffort Geertz (1978), in paper entitled 'The Bazar Economy: Information and Search in Peasant Marketing' published in the *American Review* highlighted two already existing concepts of 'peasant markets':

(a) The bazaar as the nearest real world institution of competitive market of neoclassical economics; in short, capitalist market; and is also known as formalist concept of market.
(b) The bazaar or market regarded as institution so embedded in socio-cultural context beyond the reach of modern capitalist economy.

Geertz sees bazaar as a distinctive system of social relationship catering around the production and consumption of goods and services. He further describes that bazaar is a "matter less of utility balances than of information flows –that give the bazaar its particular character and general interest" (p. 29). He further observes the essential connection of certain commodities with a particular group of people when he states that a high degree of spatial localisation and 'ethnic' specialization of trade in the bazaar which simplifies the process of finding clients…" (p. 30-31).

Analysing the market mechanisms in Indonesia, Geertz (1967) stated that Bazaar was 'once an economic institution and a way of life' and also 'a socio-cultural world' which is 'nearly complete in itself'. Bazaar may therefore be understood as a patterned flow of economic goods and services; as a set of economic mechanisms to sustain and regulate that flow and as a social and cultural system which those mechanisms are embedded (pp.372&373).

Trade in the market or market place involves more than just the long distance professional merchants exchanging their exotic wares with one another. However, it also takes into account everyone in the society – be a producer or consumer. The flow of commodities may not necessarily involve a long-distance exchanges, but traders and marketplaces in a small scale or areas (Berdan,1974:181).

Malinowski (1922) studied an interesting and unique trade system known as Kula exchange among the tribes of western Pacific islands. Kula is 'a form of exchange, of extensive, inter-tribal character carried on by communities inhabiting a wide ring of islands forming a close circuit'. Shell-necklace and shell-bracelet were the primary items of goods being exchanged –the fundamental as of Kula. He articulated how Kula was embedded in their socio-economic life and played the most important institution among the tribes in these islands. He stated: "Kula is a big, organised social construction" (pp.62-64). So he contends that although markets existed it was meant only for social and cultural rituals among communities.

Thus market has expanded gradually its ranges of applicability in the society, and with the spread of market and the introduction of "general purpose money" local economies have been integrated into the world economy changing the local institution and primitive society (Bohaman 1967:135).

Pourjafara et.al (2014:17) observed that bazaars played a unifying role in traditional cities of Iran and further identified that a bazaar was the collection of the economic, social, religious and main cultural centres of the traditional Iranian cities. Markets and marketplaces were usually part of the landscape of early states and empires (Berdan:107). In northern India, long after the decline of trading 'haats' under the Mughal rules, a new type of country town emerged before the 1880s known as Railway Mart. The coming of the railways removed rural merchants from the domain of the aristocrat and landowner. But the railway did not transform the unchanging traditional societies. Apart from making heavy use of Banaras commercial facilities, the British-India also established "unshakeable" commercial hegemony along the coasts of India (Bayly 1983:348, 461).

In 2007, Arang Keshavarzian came out with an outstanding work on market-places titled *Bazar and State in Iran: the Politics of the Tehran Marketplace,* published by Cambridge University Press. He identifies 'concrete relations as the producers of economic exchange and communal sensibilities'. "Bazar" according to him, is a loaded and dense term. Its adjectival form 'baazari' carries many layers of meaning in Persian and English. It is a concept that can be used to depict a place, an economy, a way of life, and a class, and even to 'embody Iran, the Middle East, or Islamic world' (p. 40). He defines the bazaar as a "bounded space containing a series of socially embedded networks that are the mechanism for the exchange of specific commodities"(p.41). He stresses that while the bazaar is spatially fixed, its contents have been fluid over time. He wrote: "In many cases entire trades have moved within, as well as out of, the Bazaar" (p.61). He expresses thus: "Today you will be hard pressed to find a shoemaker or seller in the shoemakers' Bazaar. The Ironmongers' Bazaar has now become a centre for the sale dried fruits and nuts" (p. 61).

Assessing the findings of various scholars on traditional trade and market, one finds that it had a close relationship with the society of mankind. The indigenous or geographically isolated tribes of the world were not necessarily isolated or secluded from the world markets or trade relations with their surrounding valley inhabitants. There was

unending cycle of commercial interactions between the hills and valleys throughout the history of mankind. Hill people were not dearth of commodity they could trade with their outside world. They traded forest either forest produces or locally manufactured (handloom) articles that caught the attention of buyers from outside. The nature of trade intercourse between the hills and valleys during the pre- and colonial dispensation is the main interest of this research.

Marketplaces in British-Assam

In colonial Assam, there was trade and exchange system between the plain-based merchants and the hill dwellers or 'trans-frontier people or tribes' who were introduced the world of new economy. Bodhisattva Kar made a historical sketch of India-rubber trade in upper Assam in the mid-nineteenth century. The rubber exchange was not limited only to the geographical limits of the British administration but significantly outside of the jurisdiction too. In this way, the 'exchange networks beyond the direct control of the British-Indian administration began to loosely integrated in the nineteenth century into the abstract cycles of world trade'. (Kar 2009:144).

The Lushai people in the Lushai Hills of British Assam (present Mizoram) were not ignorant about trade and commerce before they came in contact with the British and the latter conquest of their lands. However, the mode of trade carried out by the Lushais with the plain dwellers was different from the normal modern trade of 'basket economy'. Maintenance of any vital statistics or account of their trade and commerce was totally absent due mainly to illiteracy and also to their semi-migratory nature. The trade was carried out in barter as well as currency systems. Elephant tusk or ivory and rubber were initially the chief items of Lushai trade (Chatterjee1999, Kar 2009). The British India government had control over port town Chittagong and riverine town Cachar mainly for administrative and trading purposes. These towns located proximity to the Lushai countries served the needs of the Lushais who carried out some form of trades with the same. The Lushai trade was largely secondary in the context of their economic survival. Their subsistent economy was dependent mainly on Jhum cultivation. Quite significant deal of raids for booties and slaves gained importance among the Lushais (Chatterjee 1999:17). In fact, it is rightly stated that in the absence of sound commerce the tribals habitually resorted to raiding" (Chatterjee 1985:192).

The Lushais are the products of primary societies in small principalities and confederation of tribes without any strong economic and professional foundation. Therefore, peace trade avocations did not suit the Lushai way of living as to them plunder and looting yielded larger gains (Zorema 2011:60). This inherent nature of the Lushai made the plain dwellers or the British subjects to live in fear. Famines played important role in yielding of Lushai people to the plain dwellers and British-India for economic survival. The tribals, who did not normally descend the plains except for raiding or trading, were later pushed down to the plains by the scarcity of food (Nag 2001:1032). This intensified the trading activities of the Lushais with the 'merchants' and lastly the exhaustion of their natural resources.

In the later part of the 1800s, the British government in Cachar formally established the first three trading marts (bazaars) in three different locations in Lushai hills, viz. (1) Tipaimukh Bazaar on the Barak River where Tipai falls into it; (2) Sonai Bazaar on the Sonai River; and (3) Changsil Bazaar on the Dhaleswar.[2] Apart from these, Demagiri bazars had also been established in the southern Lushai hills. Consequent upon the famine that hit Lushai hills some more trade marts were also established to facilitate food supplies to the starving population. The commercial activities of the Lushais in general and particularly in the marts flourished with the construction of more roads and other means of communication in the Lushai hills. The geographical proximity of the trading towns in the plain such as Chittagong, Cachar, Sylhet, etc. with the Lushai hills gave way to interaction or connection between the traders and the Lushais.[3]

The flow of goods and exchanges phenomenally began into the lands of the Lushais with the establishment of these local markets or bazaars. The native traders from Cachar, the neighbouring town of the Lushai country, opened shops and supplied goods to these marketplaces. These trading marts or bazaars faced immense problems in growth due to factors such as failure of supply of commodities from the Lushai traders, exactions from the patron Chiefs and inter-chieftain tussles for control of the bazaars. However, with the full control of British government, trade and market places gradually increased its size and importance in Lushai hills as a whole ushering the land and its communities into modern world of economy and society in the late 19th and early 20th century. Flows of goods and

[2] The Lushais 1878-1889, Firma KLM Pvt. Ltd. On behalf of Tribal Research Institute, First Indian Reprint:1978, Aizawl, Mizoram, p. 41.
[3] In 1898 Silchar was connected with Calcutta and then soon a branch line was opened up to Lala Bazar at the foothills of the Lushais (Chatterjee 1999:29).

market-places in the Lushai hills predated the political conquest and also paved the way to British's political domination in the hills.

1.3 Objectives

The research has put four broad objectives:

1) To highlight the factors that led to the establishment and growth of marketplaces and flow of goods between the hills and the plain areas before and during the British conquest of the Lushai hills;
2) To explore, identify and map the items of goods traded by the Lushai and plains traders in the pre- and colonial 'Lushai Hills' or Mizoram;
3) To study the roles played by the British or state policies in effecting trade and commerce within and outside the Lushai hills;

1.4. Hypothesis

Based on the objectives placed, the research put the following hypotheses as:

1) Lushais were not living 'splendid in isolation' but had been constantly in touch with their surroundings in regard to commercial activities or in raiding. They mostly engaged in trade as they were not economically self-sufficient as stated so;

2) Unrest in the Cachar and Chittagong frontiers compelled the British to formulate a riverine bazaars and trade diplomacy with the Lushai chiefs.

3) Although the colonial government was instrumental in supporting local entrepreneurship, it played a role in the downfall of local enterprises too.

1.5 Primary Sources (Database)

The research will be carried out by applying both qualitative and quantitative methods. *Primary* sources will be obtained from:

(1) National Archives of India, New Delhi, consisting of Political Proceedings of Foreign Department, Government of India; External Proceedings of the Foreign Department, Government of India, etc.

(2) All the data related to the accounts of trade and commerce and other official proceedings were collected from the State archives in Meghalaya, Assam, Mizoram, and archive of Aizawl Theological College.

(3) Other primary sources include the published documents of the British-India such as Government of India Gazette, 1872 (Lushai Expeditionary, Despatches, 1871-71), Government of Bengal –Administrative Report on South Lushai Hills (1890-97), Government of Assam – Administrative Reports on North Lushai Hills, etc. and the accounts of memoirs, journals, newspapers and periodicals published during the British period.

1.6 Organization of the Report

The research report will be organized into the following broad chapters.

The ***first*** chapter provides the research design including a conceptual background, statement of the problem, area of study, objectives, literature review, hypotheses, data base and methodology etc.

The ***second*** chapter deals with early colonial contact and relations with the Lushai people. It explains how the establishment of riverine markets in Lushai Hills and trade in rubber was used by the three parties—British, plains traders and Lushai Chiefs—as a tool of diplomatic relation in the pre-British conquest of Lushai Hills.

The ***third*** chapter shows a transition from riverine to roadway markets and trade within the Lushai Hills during the British period. It examines how improved road transports and wet-rice (*Leilet*) movement enhanced rice market and trade in Lushai Hills.

The ***fourth*** chapter analyses the role of British administration in growth and downfall of local entrepreneurship. Cotton handloom has been identified as an important area in mapping the networks of Lushai trade with outside markets in this chapter.

The ***last*** chapter is all about the concluding remarks which provides summary and generalisation of the research finding.

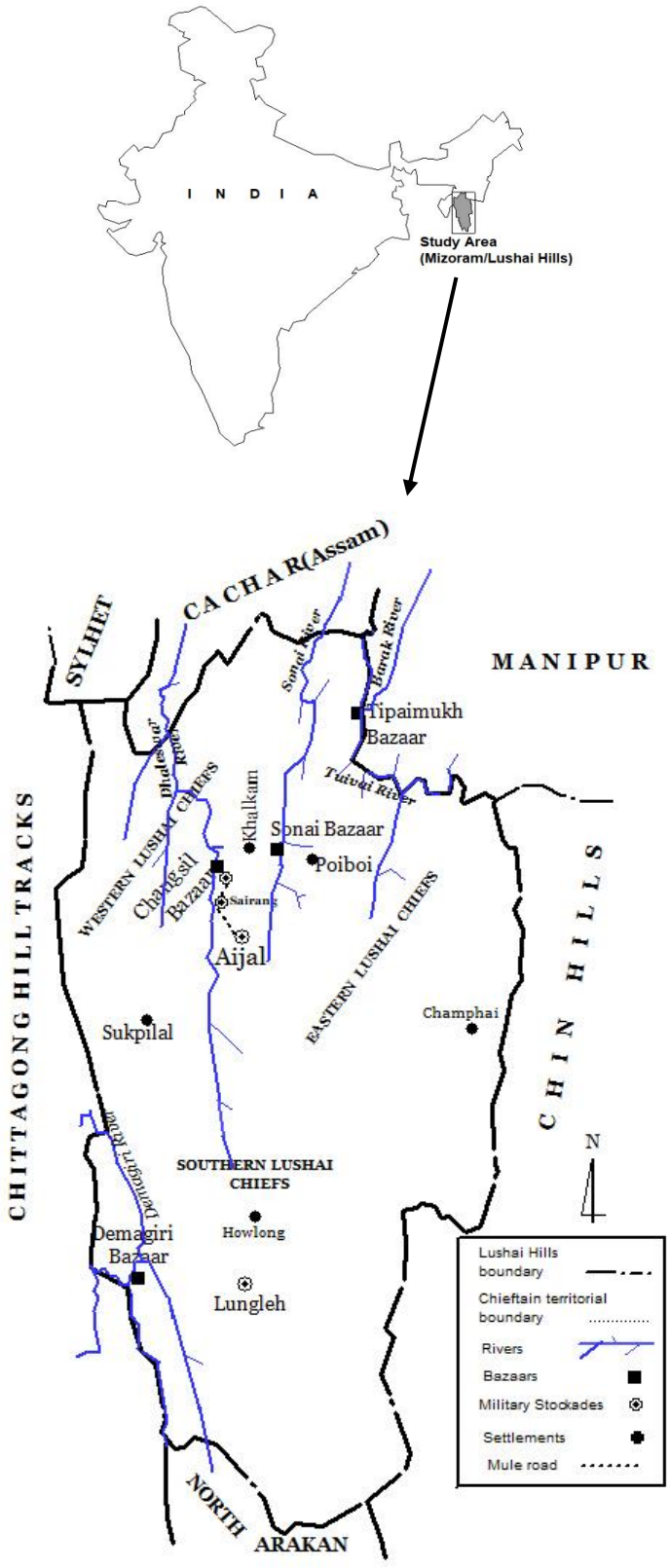

Figure 1.1: Study Area: Colonial Mizoram (Lushai Hills)
(Source: Prepared by author)

Chapter 2

Riverine *Bazaars*, Rubber Trade and Chiefs, c.1840-1890

In early 1871, the Lushais[4] raided Alexandrapore tea garden and captured Mary Winchester, the daughter of a Scottish tea plantation owner. The British government negotiated for the release of the white captive girl, and gathered intelligence from all available sources. Against the grain of this military intelligence, it is possible to extract information about the nature of Lushai commerce with its plain neighbours before the formal conquest of the Lushai hills by the British. The Cachar authorities interrogated a Mathura Burman, who had just returned from a Chief Sukpilal's village in the Lushai hills. Mathura Burman had allegedly cured the sick Pibuk Rani, mother of Sukpilal (Suakpuilala). On hearing this, the British questioned Mathura and recorded his testimony as they were keen to establish contact with Chief Sukpilal, who eventually became the chief mediator for the release of the captive white girl. During interrogation, Mathura stated that Sukpilal was very anxious to have a monopoly of Cachar market, and told them that the Deputy Commissioner should shut up all other *bazaar*.[5]

In his testimony, Mathura further mentioned that Sukpilal was envious of the southern Lushais who got 'powder and guns and sulphur from a *bazaar* near Koilashur, a *bazaar* in the jungle'.[6] This pre-colonial anecdote reveals the interdependence of the Cachar plains and the Lushai hills on each other. Since the genesis of recorded history and perhaps even before that, Bengali traders and medicine men such as Mathura Burman faced no difficulty in traversing between the hills and the plains. Informal trade, which Mathura called '*bazaar* in the jungle' was as old as human culture eventhough the ethnographers may not be able to document its beginning. What we know of Lushai's trade in forest products with the *bazaars* of the plains does not support the Romantic notion of Indian or

[4] The term Lushai (now Mizo) is used here to denote various tribal clans and sub-clans living in the erstwhile Lushai Hills District of Assam (present Mizoram State). British administrators sometimes loosely called them as 'Kukis' too.
[5] National Archives of India (NAI hereafter), New Delhi, Political—A, Foreign Department: No. 468, Account of the Cacharees who have visited Sookpilal's country, 26 June 1871, ,
[6] Account of the Cacharees who have visited Sookpilal's country, 26 June 1871

Lushai 'village communities' which were supposed to be self-sufficient and splendidly isolated.[7]

The Lushai hill (present-day Mizoram) lies between Cachar district of Assam (India), Sylhet district of Bangladesh and Chin Hills of Myanmar. Chittagong port was the nearest location for any riverine transport and communication from the Lushai country (Figure 1). As a consequence of the first Anglo-Burmese War (1824-26), Assam (previously ruled by Ahom princes), came under the British Empire in 1826. With the establishment of tea plantations in Assam, the British plantation *raj* expanded into the hilly areas such as the Lushai hills. In 1890, the British conquered the Lushais (Mizos) and these hills came to be identified as the Lushai Hills District within the province of British-Assam.[8]

Before the period of conquest, Britishers had already signed a treaty of friendship with a powerful Lushai chief, Sukpilal in 1871.[9] Like the case of Kumaon hills where *Bhotiya* traders became power-brokers between the East India Company and Tibetan traders in the mid-nineteenth century, the British did not find similar trading communities to act as imperial intermediaries.[10] But they identified friendly Lushai *lal* (chiefs) such as Sukpilal, and the plains (Bengali and Marwaris) traders who were comparable to Bhotiya traders-turned-*patwaris* (revenue collectors) of colonial Kumaon. Early colonial reports show that the Lushai chiefs were patrons of *bazaars* located at the British imperial frontiers, collecting rents from the plains traders. But they were also often represented as raiding frontier *bazaars* and tea estates of the East India Company which were stated to be located in the British territory of Cachar and Chittagong valleys. In this history of Anglo-Lushai relations, commercial contact predominated over political conquest. The fact that Lushais were traders, not simply raiders, was often overshadowed by the Romantic vision of the Lushais as noble savages, 'primitive' tribes or idyllic village communities.

Anand Yang resents the historiographic representation of India as a land of village communities and caste hierarchies. *Bazaar*, as observed by Yang, remained 'occulted' and

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[7] See Metcalfe, 'Minute on the Settlement in the Western Provinces', 331-332; Maine, *Village-communities in the East and West*, 12; Chatterjee, *A History of Mizo Economy*, 1999, 16; and Baveja, *The Land Where the Bamboo Flowers*, 69.
[8] Guha (2006), *Planter Raj to Swaraj—Freedom Struggle & Electoral Politics in Assam*, Delhi, 1.
[9] Zou (2018), 'Vai Phobia to Raj Nostalgia: Sahibs, chiefs and commoners in colonial Lushai hills', 121.
[10] Bergmann (2016), 'Confluent territories and overlapping sovereignties: Britain's nineteenth-century Indian empire in the Kumaon Himalaya', 88-98. The British identified some influential Bhotiya traders and appointed them as *Patwaris* (Revenue Officers) of the colonial state.

overshadowed by the 'historiographical terrain' of village and caste. This image of rural backwardness lent certain degree of legitimacy to 'the rule of modernity, the Raj'.[11] Like Opler, he insists that village India had various 'extensions' to the world beyond itself. These extensions include local market (*haats*), district-level *bazaar* and regional market.[12] Alongside the rural India of castes and tribes narrative, there always exists a *bazaar* India too.

The historiographical divide between village India and *bazaar* India has a deeper ideological underpinning in the colonial debates between the Romantic school and the Utilitarian school. Eric Stokes observes that the Romantic administrators reacted against the dominant Utilitarian idea of 'improvement' and the Whig concept of the 'rule of law in British-India'. The Romantics discovered the existence of village communities in nineteenth century-India which they compared with ancient Germanic village communities. They insisted on a paternalistic rule (as distinct from the rule of law) and the continuity of village customs of caste and tribe. In the Romantic vision of India, *bazaar* India seamlessly dissolved into rural self-sufficiency of village India of hierarchical caste and tribe.

This paper critiques the Romantic conflation of ancient German village and the Indian village communities of the nineteenth century.[13] The Romantic generation of the British administrators in India viewed the Indian villages as 'independent and self-sufficient economically' in their 'isolated' spaces. In the 1830s, Sir Charles T. Metcalfe opposed the extension of Utilitarian law in the *Permanent Settlement* (1793).[14] He offered us one of the earliest Romantic vision of village India as:

> …little republics, having nearly everything that they can want within themselves and almost independent of any foreign relations. They seem to last where nothing lasts. Dynasty after dynasty tumbles down; revolution succeeds to revolution…but the village

[11] Yang (1999), *Bazaar India: Markets, Society, and the Colonial State in Bihar*, 9.
[12] Yang (1999), 15.
[13] See Hildreth (translated), *Theory of Legislation, Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832)*, 1-2; and Mill, *Utilitarianism*, London, 9. The Romantic Movement began in Germany in literature, paintings and philosophy. In fact, this Romantic notion was evoked to oppose the established Utilitarianian concept propounded by moral philosophers such as Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill and others of the 18th century of Enlightenment period.
[14] Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India*, 9.

> community remains the same...This union of the village communities, each one forming a separate little state in itself...[15]

The Romantic idea of rural self-sufficiency was compatible with Karl Polanyi's concept of substantivism of near-subsistence economies which is contrasted with market economies. Polanyi claimed that the individual enjoyed 'freedom from want' in the Indian village communities 'unless the community as a whole is in a like predicament'.[16] The Romantic notion of the Indian village communities coloured scholarship of post-Independence India. A Deputy Commissioner of the Lushai Hills district, Baveja declared that a Lushai (Mizo) 'did not need money…did not require to purchase modern goods from anybody as he was capable of growing anything he needs'.[17] Likewise, Suhas Chatterjee has said that 'Lushais lived in splendid isolation before they came in contact with the English'. He further claims that 'the aboriginal primitive Mizo living in the sylvan glory had very little economic wants…'[18] This Romantic conceptualization of the Lushai hills presents a distorted picture of the Lushai history. This vision presents the Lushai people as primitive, irrational and self-sufficient.

An empirical response to Romanticism on the Indian village communities came from Srinivas and Shah's *The Myth of Self-Sufficiency of the Indian Village* (1960). This path-breaking work on the rural economic history of India challenged the assumption of rural self-sufficiency and autarchy in writings ranging from Metcalfe to Marx.[19] Srinivas and Shah maintained that the village economy has always been integrated with regional, national and even international markets and trades throughout history. This underscores the importance of learning regional economic history, a field 'as important as is neglected', and the field if deeply dug into 'will reveal how the village was related to the wider economy — national as well as international — in different parts of India'.[20] Apart from existing 'symbiotic history of hills and valleys',[21] there are ample evidences to show that

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[15] Metcalfe, *Minute on the Settlement in the Western Provinces*.
[16] Polanyi (1944), *The Great Transformation*, 171, 172.
[17] Baveja (1975), *The Land Where the Bamboo Flowers*, 69.
[18] Chatterjee (1999), *A History of Mizo Economy*, 16, 188.
[19] Srinivas and Shah (1960), 'The Myth of Self-Sufficiency of the Indian Village'. Karl Marx held that primitive village was not concerned about to what power it is transferred or to what sovereign it devolves as its internal economy remains unchanged.
[20] Srinivas and Shah, 'The Myth of Self-Sufficiency of the Indian Village'.
[21] Scott (2009), *The Art of Not Being Governed*, 26.

trading practices reflected a 'confrontation between indigenous and colonial notion of space'[22] and became a diplomatic tool used by various sovereign powers in borderlands.

Srinivas and Shah provide a necessary corrective to the myth of rural self-sufficiency associated with the Indian village communities. This paper is an attempt to prove that the Romantic concept of 'isolation' and 'self-sufficiency' of the nineteenth century-India does not hold true in the case of the tribal communities in North-East India in general and that of the Lushais (Mizos) in particular.[23]

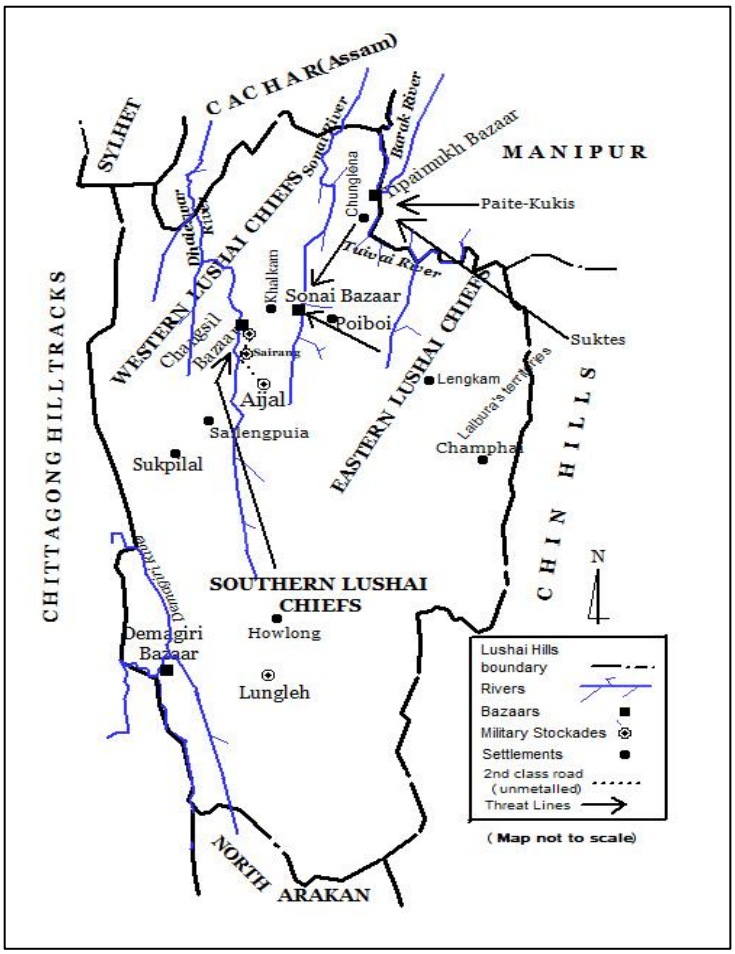

Figure 2.1: Territorial Dominance and Riverine *Bazaar*s in late nineteenth century-Lushai Hills. *(Source: prepared by the author)*

[22] Misra (2005), Changing Frontiers and Space: The Colonial State in Nineteenth-Century Goalpara, 220.
[23] This paper focuses exclusively on the bazaar as a mechanism for economic exchange, and cultural contact remains outside the purview of the study. Some scholars underline monastic networks and exchanges touching pre-colonial Lushai Hills stating that hill areas were not absolutely isolated (Chatterjee, *Forgotten Friends: Monks, Marriages, and Memories of Northeast India)*. Others observe such flow of people between the Lushai Hills and Bengal in more recent time (Schendel, *A War Within A War: Mizo Rebels and the Bangladesh Liberation Struggle*). There was evidence of cultural and economic contact between the Lushais and valley dwellers at in the 1860s at *Mela* (fair) in Kassalong (Chatterjee, *Mizoram Under the British Rule*, 50-51).

Pre-Colonial Lushai Trade

The pre-colonial trade between the Lushais and the plain dwellers has been scantily documented. Early colonial records show that the Lushais used to go down the plains for trade, but there were times when the plain traders also climbed up the hills to exchange goods. Cachar-Lushai frontier was a rich source of wild elephants. Ivory trade took place in this frontier even before the marketization of the Indian-rubber. Since the Mughal period, the Lushais participated in the ivory trade using the '*Kheddah* method of elephant catching'.[24] Elephant tusks and hides were in high demand among the Mughal emperors.[25]

Similarly, the Government of India established elephant *kheddah* under the Military Department in the *jungle* of Cachar-Lushai frontier. In the absence of well-defined border of Cachar-Lushai, the *kheddah* (or *kheda*) people frequently entered into the Lushai territories for hunting elephants. This was often considered as 'encroachment' by the Lushais. Traditionally, an elephant was a valuable source for trade and income for the Lushais.[26] The Lushais (sometimes known as Kukis)[27] were uneasy about the expansion of tea gardens in the forested areas, which disrupted their 'natural hunting grounds'.[28] Since the British abolished the *kheddah* system in 1862, ivory trade became less documented in colonial records.[29] This lack was compensated by the rich documentation of the rubber trade.

Almost half a century before British conquest of the Lushai hills, Anglo-Lushai hostilities had been reported as early as in 1843. In the colonial reports, early reference to

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[24] Milroy (1992), Elephant Catching in Assam, 39. *Kheddah* is a method of elephant catching in Assam articulated by Milroy, where stockades were built either across main elephant paths or nearby salt-springs which the elephants usually visited from time to time. At least two gates were built at both ends of the stockades where elephants could be driven from either direction. Band of hunters would drive the herds of elephants into the gates and thus close thus catch the elephants.

[25] Chatterjee (1985), 186. Chatterjee mentions that the Mughal rulers of Delhi and aristocrats in Bengal purchased ivory from the craftsmen of Sylhet who were dependent upon the Lushai-Kukis for the raw ivories. Cited from B.J.P April 12, 1855, No. 95. Verner, Superintendent of Cacahr, to the Secretary, Government of Bengal.

[26] From Lt. Colonel H.W. Norman, Secretary to the Government of India, Letter dated 22-3-1862, Military Department to the Officiating Commissary General, Bengal Judicial Proceeding (B.J.P hereafter), March 1861, No. 283: "His Excellency the Governor General-in-Council sees no reason for maintaining them (*khedas*)….He desires that the order for abolishing the *Khedas* be carried at once". Cited in Chatterjee, Mizoram Under the British Rule, Delhi, 1985, 43.

[27] In the early colonial records, the Lushais bordering on Tripura and Cachar were referred to as Kookies (Kukis). The terms Lushai and Kuki are often interchangeably used.

[28] Guite (2014), 'Colonialism and Its Unruly?—Colonial State and Kuki Raids in the Nineteenth Century Northeast India', 12.

[29] From Verner, Superintendent of Cachar, to the Secretary, Government of Bengal, April 12, 1855, No. 95, B.J.P. Cited in Mukherjee, 1999, 43.

the Lushai raids provides hints to the nature of commercial contact that preceded political conquest. On 16th April 1843, the Lushais raided Kachu Bari, a Manipuri colony in Sylhet district. The cause of this raid was romanticised to such extent that the tribal Lushais needed human heads to celebrate the death anniversary of Chief Lalchukla's father. In an inquiry made by the British Political Agent at Agartola (present-day Agartala), it became known that the cause of the raid was a conflict over trade at the Manipuri *bazaar*. The Manipuri colony had a *bazaar* within the territory of the East India Company. And these Manipuri residents allegedly misbehaved with the Lushai traders who went there to sell the hill produce. The Lushais were 'cheated and beaten up by the local village traders'.[30] Moreover, there was a conflict of interest between the Lushais and Manipuris regarding the location of the *bazaar*. The Raja of Hill Tippera (Tripura) protested to the British that the lands occupied by the Manipuris lay within his territory.[31] Chief Lalchukla (Lalchhuaklala) had a close political and trade link with the Tripuri Raja, and the Lushai chief allegedly raided the Manipuri colony to evict them from the royal estate. The British authorities at Sylhet arrested him with the assistance of Chief Lalmee Sing, the cousin of Lalchukla. In 1844, the Tripuri Raja failed to protect his ally Lalchukla as well as his own economic interests.

As expected, by the next decade several Lushai chiefs began to see the Britishers as attractive allies. In the early 1850s a Lushai delegation to the Superintendent of Cachar expressed their intention of establishing an amicable relationship with the Englishmen and expressed their willingness to have trade connection with the inhabitants of the plains. Captain Verner, the then Superintendent of Cachar told the head of Lushai delegation, Leung Mung Raja, that the British also wanted a cordial relationship with the Lushais so that the latter would not disturb the inhabitants of the plains—the British subjects.[32] F.B. Simson, the then Commissioner of the Dacca Division, reported in 1869:

> The Loosais are not averse to trade; it has always been carried on with Bengalee traders, and even the first men who came to Mr. Edger's Eastern Column on the first evening when hostilities were not as yet staved off with certainty, and who brought fowls and sucking

[30] From T.P. Wise, the Political Agent to Mr. Sealy, September 3, 1844, No. 43, B.J.P. Cited in Chatterjee 1985, 13, 16.
[31] From T.P. Wise, the Political Agent to Mr. Sealy. See Chatterjee, 1985, 13, 16.
[32] From Superintendent, Cachar, to the Secretary, Government of Bengal, 12 April 1855, No. 97, B.J.P. Cited in Chatterjee, 1985, 40.

> pigs as peace offerings, had native purees or cotton counterpanes secretly hid in the jungle at a little distance, which after confidence was established, were offered to us for sale.[33]

Simson also disapproved of the overstated hostility that the Lushais were said to exhibit. He observed that the Lushais were not always war-like or desiring to fight without any concrete reason. There were instances when the British forces or other people who ventured out in the Lushai country returned undisturbed. He eventually opined that 'peaceful intercourse with the Lushai tribes would lead to more successful administration of their country than harsh measures enforced by soldiery'.[34]

In the pre-colonial period the Lushais hunted as well as traded captives for goods with other hill groups. In 1871 a British officer from Cachar visited Sangboong (Savunga), a Lushai chief, with a number of presents such as *metnas*, necklaces, gongs and guns in exchange with captives of the chief. However, Sangboong rejected the officer's offer by arguing that his contemporary Lushai chief, 'Sookpilal had already taken many presents from the British whereas he had taken only some captives by force, and he saw no reason why he should give them up'.[35] This indicates the profitability of plunder (raid) and keeping captives in the face of the shortage of labour for *jhuming*, hunting and trading. Human captives were also bartered for guns. The pre-colonial Lushais had a near-subsistence economy, supplemented by peaceful trade as well as violent plunder, but far from self-sufficiency. Captain Lewin once reported that Lushai raiders offered the goods they plundered in Cachar for sale at Kassalong forest *bazaar*.[36]

The British rulers were highly anxious about the occasional Lushai plunders on their subjects — particularly peasants and tea planters.[37] They did not want independent Lushais frequenting the marketplaces within their territorial jurisdiction as they could not differentiate a trader from a raider. In fact, a Lushai trader today could be a raider tomorrow. The British concept of empire was territorial in nature whereas the Lushai polity maintained fuzzy territorial limit informed only by a vague sense of clan or chiefly

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[33] NAI, New Delhi, Foreign Department, Political—A: No. 101, From F.B Simson, Officiating Commissioner, Dacca Division, To the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, 31 March 1869.
[34] NAI, F.B Simson to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, 4.
[35] NAI Account of Cacharees who have visited Sookpillal's country,.
[36] NAI, New Delhi, Political—A, Foreign Department: No. 581, From H.L. Harrison, Junior Secretary to the Government of Bengal, Judicial Dept., To the Secretary to the Government of India, 27 March 1871, 5.
[37] E.B Elly, *Military Report on the Chin—Lushai Country*, Aizawl, 1893, 4. On 15th January 1869, the tea gardens of Monierkhal and Noarbund were attacked by the Lushais.

domains. Because the Lushais were not imperial subjects, the punishment of plunderers within the British territory involved legal complexity regarding British sovereignty.

The British knew that the independent Lushai chiefs wielded some degree of sovereign power, though not strictly territorial in character. As market and state converged, so did trade and polity. Sensing Lushai desire for commerce, the British resorted to *bazaar* diplomacy in rubber trade to influence the behaviour of Lushai plunderers. They replaced the old *kheddah* system with riverine *bazaar* in Lushai hills. They were also opposed to the practice of slave hunting. Conversely, the Lushai welcomed *bazaar* diplomacy as it enabled them to acquire rental income for the chiefs and commodities for all. Therefore, to step up security in the Cachar frontiers, the British government took every opportunity to befriend the Lushai people to protect their 126 miles long tea garden as well as peasant-villages in its administered areas.[38] For this, one important initiative taken by them was to establish *bazaar*s within the Lushai country. Against this backdrop, even the colonial forward policy towards the Lushais— military expedition (1871-72) which was launched — aimed at facilitating friendly intercourse and trade, and preventing the enemies of the British.[39]

After the Expedition (1871-72), the British established three *bazaar*s in the northern Lushai hills along the important rivers:

(a) Tipaimukh *bazaar* of the eastern chiefs (especially chief Poiboi) located at the confluence of the Barak and Tuivai (Tipai) rivers, separating the Lushai and Manipur hills;[40] also accessed by chiefs from the southern Lushai hills such as the Bhenkuia and Saboong or Savunga.[41]

(b) Sonai *bazaar* of the western chiefs (patronised by Khalkam or Kalkhama) located on the Sonai (Tuirial) River served as the line of demarcation between the eastern and western territories;[42] and

[38] NAI, New Delhi, Political—A, Foreign Department: No. 611, From J.W. Edgar, Deputy Commissioner of Cachar, To the Commissioner of Dacca Division, 22 March, 1871, 66-67.
[39] NAI, P.B. Simson to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, 4.
[40] The major chiefs on the eastern hills were Poiboi, Lalbura, Lengkam, Chunglena and others.
[41] *The Lushais 1878-1889,* 41.
[42] The western chiefs were Sukpilal, Khalkam, Lengpunga, Sailenpuia and others.

(c) Changsil *bazaar* of the western chiefs (patronised mainly by Sukpilal) located on the river Dhaleswar (Tlawng).[43]

The British opened these *bazaar*s with the consent of the Lushai chiefs and allowed plains traders to open shops. In the south Lushai hills a riverine *bazaar* had already been established near Demagiri River connecting the Lushais and other hill tribes with the people of Chittagong and the rest of Bengal. The three *bazaar*s were situated within the territorial domains of the eastern and western Lushai chiefs who exercised the power and responsibility to protect the traders from any threat, and in return collect rent from them. Every chief fortified their *punjees* (villages) and prepared themselves for any unexpected raid or unwarranted incident.[44]

After the opening of the three *bazaar*s in the interiors of Lushai country, the Lushai no longer need to travel to British territories in the plains for commercial purpose. This development reduced colonial anxiety about the presence of Lushai traders-cum-raiders in the plains. The *bazaar* diplomacy served the security needs of the British rulers, it provided the Lushais access to valuable commodities, and it ensured a profitable rubber trade for plains traders. The initiation of trade diplomacy served at least three powerful interests: security for the British, profit for the plains traders, and rental income for hill chiefs. Establishing *jungle bazaar* was challenging enough, but sustaining such trade diplomacy was tougher. And success in this area will depend on the ability of the three interest groups (the British, the traders and the chiefs) to meet their expected returns. British security concern in the Cachar-Lushai frontier was entangled in the larger question of sovereignty; the prospect of rent collection by Lushai chiefs was linked to the elimination of extortion on traders; and, the prospect of profit for plains traders rested on the abundant supply of forest produce especially the India rubber.

British concern for security

The British primary concern was to give security to their subjects — tea planters and peasants in the 'cultivated frontier'.[45] To realize this security objective, they initially

[43] The western chief Sukpilal and his tributary chiefs—Sailenpui, Lengpunga, Lengkhunga, and Baniatangi. See The Lushais 1878-1889, 41, 67.
[44] *The Lushais 1878-1889,* 22-23.
[45] NAI, Edgar to the Commissioner of Dacca Division, 22 March 1871.

experimented with military outposts at strategic locations between Bengal and Lushai hills. In 1867 outposts were established near Kassalong in the Lushai-Chittagong frontiers. These outposts failed to protect British subjects, and the hill groups continued to "raid with impunity".[46] Then a military expedition was launched against the Lushais in 1871-72. After this, the British depended heavily on two strategic instruments to secure the Lushai frontier of the British Empire: military outposts and trade diplomacy.[47] Police outposts were established at the Cachar and Sylhet frontiers and riverine *bazaar*s were established in the Lushai hills. The British administrators prepared themselves to conquer Lushai hills should trade diplomacy fail.[48]

F. B. Simson (the Commissioner of Dacca Division) also believed that rubber would yield valuable political results for the British.[49] He considered rubber as the prime item of trade that would tremendously transform the Lushai economy too. Knowing the value and potential supply of rubber from the Lushai country on the one hand and the Lushai's lack of awareness of the value, on the other hand, the British predicted that the Lushais would be much wealthier in trading rubber than engaging in plunders.

> The Loosais, therefore, have the means of obtaining by trade far more wealth than they could possible acquire by a long course of successful plundering, and will come to realize this fact after a few years of intercourse with us, for they are wanting in intelligence. But as they become rich, as their villages get filled with all the articles that hillmen covet, the danger to them of attacks of tribes still further east will be a constantly increasing one, and this must make them more inclined to rely upon our good will.[50]

The new security measures were more or less successful in containing 'Lushai outrages' against two types of British subjects—tea planters and peasants. However, the *bazaar* diplomacy resulted in fresh security vulnerability in the person of the rubber traders who were British subjects. The British opened riverine *bazaar*s in the Lushai hills, a territory beyond the imperial jurisdiction. Unlike the sedentary peasants or planters, the plains traders were mobile. Their constant movement between the hills (Lushai territory)

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[46] Elly, *Military Report on the Chin-Lushai Country*, 11-12.
[47] Apart from the two instruments mentioned, the British frontier officers maintained good relations with Lushai chiefs through periodic tours and meetings at the riverine *bazaar*s.
[48] Elly, 11-12.
[49] NAI, New Delhi, Political-A, Foreign Department: No. 638, From F.B. Simson, Commissioner of the Dacca Division, to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, Political Department, 28 March 1871, 109.
[50] NAI, New Delhi, Political-A: No. 640, Notes on the Looshais by Mr. Burland, May 1871, 112.

and the plains (British territory) produced a new security concern. As always, state action to protect a particular section of its subject had the unintended effect of creating a new problem. If trade diplomacy promised to solve a security problem of the peasants and planters, it also created a new security concern for the rubber traders who routinely crisscrossed the boundaries between British Empire and Lushai territory.

Since riverine *bazaar*s were beyond the boundaries of the Empire, the British outsourced to the Lushai chiefs the job of providing security to its subjects—the rubber traders. In return the Lushai chiefs would receive a monthly rent from traders who set up business within their territories. As a part of trade diplomacy, this security arrangement implicitly recognised the territorial sovereignty of the Lushai chiefs. In other words, it signified the legal limits of the Raj beyond the boundaries of the Empire. Although the Lushai chiefs welcomed foreign traders, they were jealous of guarding their sovereignty. For instance, Chief Khalkam, the patron of Sonai *bazaar,* urged the British to move the *bazaar* site 20 miles away from the then location to avoid British surveillance.[51] However, the British did not grant his request.

Bergmann's case study of nineteenth century-Kumaon underlines an overlapping sovereignty in an imperial frontier of highland Asia.[52] In the Lushai frontier, there were no strong claimants of sovereignty comparable to sovereigns of Nepal and Tibet over the trade depots of Kumaon. In principle, the British acknowledged the sovereignty of Lushai chiefs to whom they outsourced the responsibility to protect the plains traders, who were legally British subjects. As Bergmann calls the Kumaon depots 'anomalous space',[53] the riverine *bazaar*s of Lushai hills were anomalous space created by the British beyond their legal jurisdiction. Whereas the British were the authors, the Lushai chiefs were the patrons of riverine *bazaar*s in exchange for rental revenue.

Every Lushai chief and his people almost entirely depended on its own market for supply of commodities. The three riverine *bazaar*s of the Lushai hills were strictly organised according to the principle of territorial sovereignty. No Lushai could buy or sell beyond the territorial jurisdiction of a given chiefly domain. The Lushai chiefs prohibited inter-market access since they feared that it would lead to shortage in supply of

[51] See *The Lushais 1878-1889,* 56.
[52] Bergmann observed that the Britain's Empire, Bhotiyas traders, Tibetan monarch and the Nepali king had overlapping claims over the land and trade revenues from the border markets of Kumaon valley in the mid-nineteenth century. See Bergmann, 88.
[53] Bergmann, 88.

commodities. They also regarded this as a challenge to one's territorial lordship. For instance, the eastern clans who owned the Tipaimukh *bazaar* were not given access to marketplaces such as the Sonai and Changsil *bazaar*s which fell within the domain of the western chiefs. Once in September 1878, as the shopkeepers of Tipaimukh *bazaar* had left, men of the eastern Lushai went to the Sonai *bazaar* to buy salts in exchange for wax. On their return, chief Khalkam's men caught and robbed them of their salt. In retaliation Lengkam attacked Khalkam's village and took fifteen heads.[54] Similarly, chief Sukpilal, the overlord of the western clans and patron of Changsil *bazaar*, always wanted the *bazaar* shifted to Guturmukh near Lushai-Cachar border to prevent access of market to the southern Lushai chiefs such as Savunga and Bhenkuia of the Howlong clans. [55]

The British outsourcing of security to the Lushai chiefs had the merit of honouring Lushai sovereignty. But it had complications as rival chiefs competed for rent harvesting that caused much anxiety for plains merchants. The newly established forest *bazaar*s were subjected to threats emanating from three different sources. Firstly, the Tipaimukh *bazaar* was under threat from the Paite (Guite) of Manipur and Sukte tribesmen of Chin Hills whose territories were contiguous to the borders of the eastern Lushai hills.[56] Secondly, the Sonai *bazaar* was threatened by its immediate eastern chiefs such as Lengkam, Lalsavung and Poiboi.[57] The Changsil *bazaar* was in danger of attack from the southern chiefs like Bhenkuia and Savunga to whom Sukpilal denied the access of market and rent share. [58] Lastly, internal threats persisted too. Sometimes the lust for commodity and money lured the patron chiefs to excessively extort or even loot the traders of their own *bazaar*s too (see Figure1).[59] In some occasions patron chiefs failed to protect their ~~riverine~~ *bazaar*s from rival local chiefs who plundered the properties of traders who were British subjects. In worst cases, patron chiefs turned plunderers as they could not resist the

[54] See *The Lushai 1878-1889*, 58—59.
[55] See *The Lushai 1878-1889*, 67.
[56] See *The Lushai 1878-1889*, 48 & 50. On 3rd May 1882, chief Chunglena's village, the nearest keeper of Tipaimukh bazaar, was raided by the Paite tribesmen (sometimes called Suktes), killed 25 men and looted Rs.700 worth of property. In January 1883, the Tipaimukh bazaar was attacked by the Sukte from Chin Hills, but no significant damaged was done due to the arrival of the British troops.
[57] See *The Lushais 1878-1889*, 61. In 1884, eastern chief Poiboi sent his armed men to Sonai Bazaar with orders to take on any of a western chief Thangula's men. They went to the bazaar and appropriated a quantity of salt and other articles to the value of more than Rs.300.
[58] See *The Lushais 1878-1889*, 67.
[59] See *The Lushais 1878-1889*, 57 & 69. Traders complained that Chief Khalkam's mantri Rutton Singh, carried out arbitrary exactions from them. They warned that they would leave the bazaar if he remained in the country (p.57). In 1878, chief Sukpilal instigated his men to loot his own patronised (Changsil) bazaar ostensibly to blame the eastern chiefs Poiboi and others (p.69).

temptation for extortion from traders, from whom they had collected rents with the promise of protecting them. Poiboi, for instance, was the overlord and patron of Tipaimukh *bazaar* in the east for which the British granted him the right of collecting rental revenue.

In June 1877, Lengkam and Chunglena (also eastern chiefs) looted Tipaimukh *bazaar*. Poiboi failed to protect the traders who were forced to close down the business. The shops remained closed for one whole year. Desperate need for rent, hence, compelled Poiboi to enter into agreement with other rival claimants (Chief Lengkam and Chunglena) to share his rental revenue. Remarkably, Poiboi persuaded the plundering chiefs to apologise to British authority in Cachar for their 'misbehaviour'. Presenting *nazars* to the British, the *mantries* of the Lushai chiefs pleaded the British to resume business at Tipaimukh *bazaar* and promised good behaviour in future. The Deputy Commissioner, after consulting the traders, made the *mantries* pay a fine of Rs. 30 which he distributed among the traders to compensate for their losses. He then made arrangement for the speedy resumption of trade at Tipaimukh *bazaar*.[60]

Although Chief Poiboi was too weak to protect Tipaimukh *bazaar* against rivals, he was strong enough to plunder neighbouring *bazaar* at Sonai. In January 1884, Sonai *bazaar* was looted by men of Poiboi and Labura, the eastern chiefs. The traders, seeing number of armed Lushais approaching the *bazaar* at night, ran for their lives and took cover in a forest nearby. Poiboi's men looted a large measure of salt and other articles to the value of Rs.309. When the British probed this incident, Poiboi admitted that four of his men went down the *bazaar* and took some salt. He then invoked his sovereign right to deliver justice in accordance with his clan method of conflict resolution in which he acquired the appropriated salt for himself. This customary norm did not, however, deliver justice to the victims, the shopkeepers. After this incident, the British stationed a guard of twelve sepoys of the Frontier Police at the *bazaar*. This security arrangement was temporary. On its withdrawal, the traders left the *bazaar* out of fear.[61] This indicates that the traders felt safe under Empire's protection whilst lost confidence on patron chiefs such as Khalkam.

Here is an extreme case where a patron chief conspired to plunder his own *bazaar*, from which he received rental revenue. In 1878, chief Sukpilal conspired and had his men

[60] See *The Lushais 1878-1889*, 45-47.
[61] See *The Lushais 1878-1889*, 61.

loot Changsil *bazaar*, whose patron he was. They looted goods and cash over Rs.3000 worth, driving away all the traders.[62] The British knew well that Sukpilal clandestinely designed the plunder to frame the eastern Lushai chiefs. As a result, the British penalised him with large amount of money.[63]

Thus apart from tea planters and peasants, the British concern for security was extended to its traders (merchants) beyond its boundary. Unlike the planters and peasants who were sedentary subjects of the Raj, the traders were mobile subjects for whom the British suffered security nightmare. Since it was legally not possible to fully protect its subjects beyond its territorial jurisdiction, the colonial power outsourced this security to the Lushai chiefs who were unreliable security providers for British subjects who traded in the *bazaar*s of the Lushai hills.

Prospect and issues of rent collection by hill chiefs

A prerequisite for the success of British trade diplomacy was to keep up moderate rent (*shida*) payable to Lushai chiefs who acted as security providers of traders coming from British territories. The prospect of a regular rent was one of the most important factors that induced the chiefs to set up trading places within their territories. The rate of commercial rent varied from one *bazaar* to another. For instance, for Changsil *bazaar*, the rental rate was Rs.10 a shop per month for chief Sukpilal; two baskets of salt per month for his tributary chiefs such as Pibuk, Lalchung and Lengpunga, and three baskets of salt per month for Baniatangi (Vanhneithangi, Sukpilal's sister-chief). In consideration for these rents, Sukpilal was not allowed to undertake any other levy or fine, or other imposition from the traders, and should also prevent other chiefs from doing so.[64] Likewise, Sonai *bazaar* was closely watched by chief Khalkam who lived nearby. So he alone took the rents from the shopkeepers and shared it with no other chief.

After chief Sukpilal passed away in 1880, his tributary chiefs broke normal rental rate. His descendants subjected the traders to large amount of extortions. The chiefs took the death of chief Sukpilal as an opportunity to mistreat the traders. In the following year 1881, Major Boyd, the Deputy Commissioner of Cachar investigated the matter and found

[62] See *The Lushai 1878-1889*, 67.
[63] See *The Lushais 1878-1889*, 59.
[64] See *The Lushai 1878-1889*, 68.

that a shopkeeper was reported to 'pay up at the rate of Rs. 45 per *mensem* for the previous four months although trade was better at Changsil than at any other *bazaar*'. This compelled Boyd to make a new arrangement. He entitled the share of Rs.69.2 in cash and kind per month. The traders felt the rate too high to meet though the profit accrued was moderate enough. To this, Boyd wrote: 'The rate of rent fixed is very high, as compared with that obtaining in the other bazars, but the profits are much greater'.[65]

In the case of the Tipaimukh *bazaar*, as no fixed rate of rent was made for the chief to levy, issues frequently arose between the chiefs and the shopkeepers. The traders found difficult to meet the rental rate demanded by the chiefs. This led to closure of the Tipaimukh *bazaar* at certain point of times. In effect, by the year 1884, there were only two shops in this *bazaar*. The British government knew that it was not a security issue alone that hindered the business, but also the extortionate rate of rent exacted by the chiefs. When the profits were apparently less than the rate of rent, the shopkeepers were inclined to close down their shops. The British government had to chalk out fresh contracts with the chiefs to ensure continuity of business in the *bazaar*s. This time the Deputy Commissioner of Cachar proposed an annual subsidy or rent for the Lushai chiefs which the latter had to collect from the Cachar Darbar. In return the chiefs should stop collection of rents from the shop-keepers. If the chiefs conducted any loot or outrage of any sort at any time to the traders or anywhere within the British jurisdiction, the amount of subsidy would be heavily deducted. However, this proposal was not accepted by Sir Charles Elliott, the chief Commissioner of Cachar. Elliott stated that the same system of subsidization that the British applied to the frontier tribes such as Aka, Bhutias, Daflas, etc. had not been successful.[66] Again in October 1884, these two chiefs sent their minor *mantries* for the same purpose, yet the Deputy Commissioner of Cachar told them that the chief *mantries* should come to deal with such affairs.[67]

Plains traders had no problem paying moderate rent to the Lushai chiefs, but they resented extortionate rates. They frequently petitioned the British authority on high rental rates that the chiefs exacted at the three riverine *bazaar*s. Violating the terms of Anglo-Lushai trade contract, the hill chiefs had the tendency of collecting revenue beyond their domains. By 1884, these multiple demands for rent led to the shutdown of Sonai *bazaar*.

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[65] NAI, New Delhi, Political-A, Foreign Department: No. 467, From Major M.O. Boyd, Deputy Commissioner of Cachar, to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam, 25 February 1881, 7.
[66] *The Lushai 1878-1889*, 62-63.
[67] *The Lushai 1878-1889*, 63-64.

Due to the prevailing extortionate rental demand by Lushai chiefs resulted in the proposal for substituting rent (paid by traders) with state subsidy (to be paid by the British). But this suggestion of *posa*-type of payment came to nothing.

Speaking in the context of the three bazaars (Tipaimukh, Sonai and Changsil), Lushai chiefs collected rent (tax) from shopkeepers who were known as '*Kaya* shopkeepers'.[68] They were mostly *Malwari* shopkeepers who expanded eastward from Goalpara since the1890s. By the mid-nineteenth century there were already fifteen *Malwari* business families operating in the British Assam. Haribilas Aggarwal, for instance, was a leading rubber trader at that time. The British government issued long lease to rubber traders and this was replaced by an annual lease called *Ijara* in 1869. The *Ijara* gave plains traders the right to purchase rubber from hill tappers within designated areas.[69] So it can be assumed that the shopkeepers operating in the Lushai Hills paid *Ijara* tax to the British and local rents to the Lushai chiefs. This arrangement continued till 1890 when the British replaced the Lushai chiefs as the rent collector. There is, however, no evidence from the sources that rent was collected from individual Lushai traders who visited the riverine bazaars.

The profits of traders in rubber

Apart from reliable security of British subjects and moderate rent for Lushai chiefs, another important condition for the success of Anglo-Lushai trade diplomacy was a profitable rubber trade for plains merchants. The profit margin of the rubber traders further depended on price movement and abundance supply of rubber by Lushai tappers. Whereas price movement (especially in Calcutta) reflected demand-side phenomenon, the availability of rubber in the Lushai hills represented a supply-side phenomenon. In the long run, depletion of rubber forest took a toll on the viability of the rubber trade. The profit margin of the plains traders in the riverine *bazaar*s was gradually affected by the price sensitivity of Lushai rubber tappers who had access to the rubber markets beyond the confines of the Lushai hills.

[68] Kar (2009) 'Historia Elastica: A Note on the Rubber Hunt in the North-Eastern Frontier of British India', 135-136.
[69] Kar, Historia Elastica, 137.

At the end of the Anglo-Lushai expedition in 1872, the British authorities as well as plains traders began to form a clearer picture of the extent of rubber forest in Lushai hills. Those were the days when the price of rubber at Calcutta was attractive. A report in 1871 enthusiastically claimed that the Lushai hills had 'unlimited supply of valuable staple, Indian rubber'.[70] It maintained that the hills between Cachar, Manipur and the Chittagong Hill Tracts were densely covered with rubber encompassing almost the entire Lushai hills. A Report from F. B. Simson (the Commissioner of Dacca Division) states:

> (…) at present there seems to be as much rubber as the Looshai can collect; and the demand for the article seems to be steadily increasing, it is probable that the price will long continue, at least as high as it now is.[71]

Even before the rubber trade was formalised in the early 1870s, the Lushais used to sell their rubber in the plain markets in Cachar, Sylhet, etc. which further reached the markets of Calcutta. A recent research by Bodhisattva Kar confirmed that a lucrative rubber trade had already existed between Assam and Calcutta since the 1830s. Indian rubber was highly demanded in United States, England and other European markets till 1890.[72] Within the British Assam the Lushais were not the only hill groups who encashed on the rubber trade. Other groups such as Nagas, Garos and Mikirs, to name a few, participated in this commercial exchange. From Patkai hills the Naga tribes brought rubber to the markets in Assam plains. Rubber was collected and sold to the Government at a fixed rate in Garo Hills too. This Indian rubber was mainly used for wire, pencil, sulphur and other critical infrastructural purposes.[73] Though the British had no specific economic rubber policy for the Lushai Hills, it offered another attractive field for plains traders in a territory beyond the colonial jurisdiction.

Major M.O. Boyd (Deputy Commissioner of Cachar) characterized the early days of rubber trade (roughly 1872-74) as 'a period of traders' ideal bliss'.[74] The plains rubber traders enjoyed very high profit margin in those years because of three convergent developments: high global price of rubber, Lushais' ignorance of real market price of rubber, and abundant supply of rubber by Lushais.[75] The traders bought rubber at Rs. 27

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[70] NAI, New Delhi, Political-A: No. 638, From F. B. Simson, Commissioner of Dacca Division to Secretary to the Government of Bengal, Political Department, 28 March 1871,109.
[71] NAI, From Simson to Secretary to the Government of Bengal, 110.
[72] Kar, 'Historia Elastica, 135-136.
[73] Kar, 'Historia Elastica, 141-142.
[74] *The Lushais 1878-1889*, 43.
[75] *The Lushais 1878-1889*, 43.

per maund at Changsil *bazaar* (Lushai hills) and sold at Rs. 60 per maund at Silchar.[76] Since 1876, the global price of rubber fell, but prices recovered in the early 1880s and fell again around 1884.[77] The fluctuation of rubber price in the global market had direct impact on the profit margin of traders in the three riverine *bazaar*s of the Lushai hills. The decline of rubber price in April 1876 ate into the profit margin of plains traders in the Lushai hills. The plains traders in Tipaimukh *bazaar* protested about their inability to amass profit from the sale of rubber compared to the past years. They warned that their business would halt on account of lack of profit.[78] M.O. Boyd happened to visit the riverine *bazaar*s of Lushai hills at a time when rubber price fell in 1876. Traders reported that they might have to close down the shops if the rubber price continued to stay depressed.[79]

Rubber allowed the Lushais obtain manufactured salts of higher quality than those that were locally made. It was estimated that a Lushai man could collect enough rubber in a month to exchange with plains traders for more than enough salt to last him and his family for a year. A record states that the southern Lushais exchanged one maund of rubber for a quarter maund of salt.[80] The Lushais also sold rubber for money. Within 1874-75, the Lushais went to Cachar to buy *mithun* with cashes they received from the sale of rubber.[81] The Lushais became more informative about price differentials in different marketplaces. To sell rubber dear, the Lushais began to venture beyond the three riverine *bazaar*s of the Lushai hills. Some sellers went as far as Lakhimpur *bazaar* in Cachar and demanded the same higher price available at Lakhimpur (Cachar) for rubber sales within the Lushai hills.[82] This global price movement of rubber influenced the pattern of economic activities of Lushai rubber tappers who gradually became sensitive to differential rubber prices within the Lushai hills and Assam.

In March 1870, the value of rubber was reported to be less than one-tenth of the potential outturn that the forest of the Lushai hills had.[83] But by 1877, the traders of Changsil *bazaar* apprised the Deputy Commissioner of Cachar about the depletion of

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[76] *The Lushai 1878-1889,* 68.
[77] Kar, 144—145.
[78] *The Lushai 1878-1889,* 43.
[79] NAI, New Delhi, Political-A, No. 467: From Major M.O. Boyd, Deputy Commissioner of Cachar, to the Secretary to Chief Commissioner of Assam, 28 February 1881; Also see *The Lushais 1878-1889*, 69.
[80] NAI, New Delhi, Notes on the Looshais by Mr. Burland, 113.
[81] *The Lushais 1878-1889*, 55.
[82] NAI, New Delhi, M.O. Boyd to the Secretary to Chief Commissioner of Assam.
[83] NAI, New Delhi, F. B. Simson to the Government of Bengal, 109.

rubber forest cover.[84] A decade after this, a military report mentioned that the rubber forest of the Lushai hills had been 'exhausted' due to the wasteful method of tapping by the Lushais.[85] An annual administrative report of 1890 returned the volume of rubber trade for that year at barely three maunds at Demagiri *bazaar* in the south Lushai hills.[86]

The breakdown and British control of the *bazaar*s

Of the three *bazaar*s of the Lushai hills, Tipaimukh became the flash point when British frontier police were stationed in 1882 to supplement the security for a rice go-down set up to cope with famine in the Lushai hills. So far, the British pretended to respect the territorial sovereignty of chief Poiboi, the patron of Tipaimukh *bazaar*. The posting of frontier police for almost six months complicated matters eventhough the British did not question the chief's right to collect his rental revenue. To no avail, chief Poiboi protested the stationing British guards within his territorial domain. This paved the way for the shutdown of Tipaimukh *bazaar* in 1888 almost entirely due to security vulnerability. This *bazaar* was fully exposed to Sukte raids from the Chin and Manipur hills.[87] At Tipaimukh, trade was still profitable and patron chiefs did not resort to exorbitant rents in 1888. But fear of Sukte raid induced the eastern chiefs of Tipaimukh *bazaar* to move further west near Sonai *bazaar*. This compelled the traders to abandon the Tipaimukh *bazaar*.

If the Suktes were a threat to the patron of Tipaimukh *bazaar* (Poiboi), he was similarly a threat to the patron of Sonai bazar (Khalkam). Twelve British sepoys were posted at Sonai *bazaar* in 1884 when men of Poiboi plundered a property (salt) of traders at Sonai. The posting of British forces infringed the legal sovereignty of Khalkam, and he must have raised this legal anomaly. The sepoys were withdrawn within a month. But traders lost their confidence in the security provided by Khalkam and they abandoned Sonai *bazaar* following the withdrawal of the sepoys. The traders came back after five years for a month in January 1889. But the fear of paying double rent to rival claimants, Khalkam and Poiboi, disappointed them bitterly. Then the plains traders left and never

[84] *The Lushais 1878-1889*, 56-57.
[85] Elly, 12.
[86] NAI, New Delhi, Foreign Department, External-A, Nos. 115—120: Report on the Administration of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Frontier for 1889-90, January 1891, , 5.
[87] *The Lushais 1878-1889*, 48, 55

came back to Sonai *bazaar* even though some prospects of making profit in rubber still existed.[88]

Initially protected by chief Sukpilal, Changsil was the longest surviving riverine *bazaar* established in the early 1870s. After the death of the original patron chiefs, the descendants of Sukpilal provided joint protection to this marketplace. The *bazaar* had never been attacked by any rival chief. For this reason the British never posted any police force at Changsil *bazaar*. It is difficult to establish the exact timing of the closing of this old Changsil *bazaar*, which was still functioning in July 1889.[89] This *bazaar*, however, came under pressure from changing economic circumstances. The supply of rubber was depleted after decades of over-tapping.[90] This practice of over-tapping got intensified during years of famine (*Mautam*). Such a famine was recorded from 1881-82.[91] Moreover, Lushai sellers and buyers became more responsive to price differential between Changsil and other *bazaar*s in the plains. They began to sell their products (cotton, bamboo, etc.) directly to Silchar, Lakhimpur and Hailakandi, which were within British territories. This development conspired to bring an end to the old Changsil *bazaar* probably in January 1890.

Unlike the patrons of the Tipaimukh *bazaar*, the patrons of Changsil *bazaar* had been able to provide adequate security to traders from whom they collected rent. But even before the formal closing of Changsil *bazaar*, the descendants of Sukpilal (patrons of this *bazaar*) fell on bad days due to falling rental income. This can be explained by the decreasing volume of rubber trade, especially after the famine of the early 1880s. Destitution of Changsil chiefs made attractive the prospect of participating in a raid as long as this took place outside Cachar. In January 1889, the upper Chengri Valley in Chittagong district of Bengal was raided by Southern Lushais where two of the patrons of Changsil *bazaar*—chief Lengpunga and his half-brother Zaroka, also participated.[92]

With the close of Changsil *bazaar*, the era of trade diplomacy in Anglo-Lushai relationship came to an end. Tipaimukh *bazaar* ended largely due to the failure of Lushai chiefs to give security to traders. Sonai *bazaar* was embroiled in rent disputes between

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[88] *The Lushai 1878-1889,* 61-67
[89] NAI, New Delhi, Foreign Department, External-A, Nos. 27-66: From J. Westland, to Sir. H.M. Durand: Chengri Valley Raids—Chin Lushai Expedition, 24 July 1889.
[90] *The Lushai 1878-1889,* 104.
[91] *The Lushais 1878-1889,* 105.
[92] NAI, New Delhi, Foreign Department, External-A, Nos. 126-144: From Officiating Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam, 28 July 1890.

rival chiefs and this made to the flight of the plains traders. Similarly, Changsil *bazaar* died gradually because of depletion of rubber supply following over-tapping during the famine of 1881-1882. For variety of reasons trade diplomacy no longer met its goals spelt out at the end of Lushai expedition in 1871-72. The failure to establish a viable commercial contact with the Lushai led to the British conquest of Lushai hills in 1890.

Captain Browne was deputed as the first Political Officer of Lushai hills in 1890 with the mission to conquer and annex this new district permanently to the Empire.[93] As a part of his military strategy, Browne re-opened the old Changsil *bazaar* and extended it to Sairang *bazaar* and Aijal.[94] There was no more negotiation with the local chiefs to provide security to the traders at the new *bazaar*s. Unlike the old riverine *bazaar*s established in the early 1870s, Browne's *bazaar*s were exclusively protected by British forces.

To prevent the plains traders from incurring loss, he allowed only five shops to open in 1890. He appointed five local men, (not necessarily the chiefs) to supervise and set the price/rates of commodities in the *bazaar*. Apart from stationing militaries in Changsil, he extended the riverine route beyond Changsil to Sairang.[95] Thus the protection of *bazaar* came under the colonial state in the Lushai hills for the first time. In the effort to rebuild the market and trade, Browne liberalized as well as regulated the trade. He gave a free hand to the shopkeepers and the Lushais to do their business while at the same time played paternal role by making certain regulations.

> That as they are anxious to have a bazar at Changsil, one will now be opened. That is not the Sarkari matter, but one between the traders and the Lushais. If the Lushais think the traders are charging too high prices, they can come to me, and I will fix a *nerikh*, but they must remember that the traders have very far to come, and are put too much expense and trouble, and if they do not make a reasonable profit, they will go away altogether.[96]

It is interesting to see that, since the British establishment had started to ensure security to traders, Browne declared that the Lushai chiefs no longer had any right to collect rent or *siddha* from the traders. It is a well-known fact that apart from the need of consumer

[93] NAI, New Delhi, Officiating Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam.
[94] NAI, New Delhi, External-A, Diary of Captain H.R. Browne, political Officer, Lushai Hills, 25 May 1890, Foreign Department, 3.
[95] NAI, New Delhi, Foreign Department, External-A: Nos. 127, Extract from the Diary of Captain H.R. Browne, Political Officer, Lushai Hills, 4 May 1890, 1.
[96] NAI, New Delhi, External-A, Foreign Department: From Captain H.R. Browne, the Political Officer, Lushai Hills, to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam, 14 June 1890, 4.

goods, the attraction for continual *siddha* or rent was the rationale behind the chiefs' insistence for resumption of *bazaar*. Now the chiefs' dream of this regular revenue had come to an end. British protection of the marketplace apparently marked the end of the political freedom of the Lushai chiefs and the beginning of direct colonial control. Browne sums it up:

> I explained to the chiefs that they used to receive *siddha* in return of protecting the traders, but now that we were here we would protect them for ourselves, and that we could not allow anyone to levy rates of any kind from any of our people as long as we were in the country.[97]

Browne further warned the ethnic groups of neighbouring Manipur and other places against any aggressive attitude towards the Lushais since the Lushais had become the British subjects, and that attack on the Lushais would invite reprisal from the British.[98] Moreover, the British began to collect revenue (tax) from the chiefs henceforth. This, however, was an insult to the all the Lushai chiefs that had enjoyed relative sovereignty in their respective domains for long. They found it hard to come to terms with this reality. Thus they began to resist the British power by raiding the military stockades and *bazaar*s, the British convoys, and so forth which consequently led to the murder of Captain Browne in an ambush on 9th September 1890.[99] Since then, the British began another round of extensive military operation to quell the 'recalcitrant' Lushais and completely brought the entire Lushai hills under its Empire in 1895.

Conclusion

The colonial documents and literatures show that there were twenty years (1870-90) of *bazaar* diplomacy between the British Empire and the independent Lushai chiefs. Prior to this, nevertheless, there were trade avocations mainly on elephant tusks between the Lushais and the plains dwellers. Rubber became the main trade item that replaced the elephant tusk during the period of British *bazaar* diplomacy in the Lushai hills. Later on, rubber was overtaken by trade on cotton, wax, bamboo, etc. Due to over-tapping, rubber

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[97] NAI, New Delhi: Captain H.R. Browne to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam, 4.
[98] NAI, New Delhi, Captain H.R. Browne to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam, 4.
[99] NAI, New Delhi, Foreign Department, External A, No. 257, From R.B. McCabe to J.W. Quinton, 14 October 1890, 6.; Also see NAI, New Delhi, Foreign Department, External-A: No.142,.From E.A. Gait, Census Superintendent, for the Personal Assistant to the Chief Commissioner of Assam (on tour), to the Secretary to Government of India, 11 September 1890.

and ivory as the backbones of Lushai trade, came to an end. Trade continued on though diversified in character.

There were two phases of bazaar and trading activities associated with the Lushai hills: the period of ivory and rubber, and the phase of diversified items such as cotton, bamboos, wax, etc. Since ivory trade had no detail record, its representation is sketchy. Rich accounts of Indian rubber in colonial records enable us to give special emphasis in this research. But after a decade rubber depleted due to over-tapping by the Lushais. After the old British diplomatic policy (trade and *bazaar*) collapsed due to various interlocking factors such as frequent inter-chief clashes, unduly extortion of rent, and renewed raids in the British territories—mainly the southern Lushai hills, the British took up a new policy. The British felt that full annexation of the Lushai hills was the only viable option to achieve a lasting peace and security in the Cachar and surrounding borders. In 1890, the government constructed its military stockades in the marketplaces and 'imposed' peace to resume trade and complete the conquest of the Lushai hills as well.

The study of trade and *bazaar* in the Lushai hills is a scholarly response to an established notion that Lushai economic life was isolated, splendid or self-sufficient in its pasts. The history and dynamics of trade and *bazaar* had always been overshadowed in the writings of Lushai historiography. In the backdrop of romanticism, the idea of primitive tribal nationality had been constructed. And the Lushais themselves somehow complied with this romantic narrative about their economic life. But the late nineteenth century-Lushai chiefs were desperate for goods, markets and rents, etc. even at the cost of their independence. The Lushai commercial history cannot be romanticised unless one totally ignores the history of the Lushai chiefs and their relation to trade and *bazaar*s within and outside their territories. The existing romantic narrative, though created initially by the British themselves, has been questioned by this piece of research. Archival documentation highly attested otherwise that the Lushai economy was rational and interlinked with outside world.

Chapter 3

Rice Production and Marketisation

The British began its rule in the Lushai Hills since the beginning of the 1890s (complete conquest in 1895 and amalgamation in 1897). The first and foremost challenge the colonial administration faced was to construct bridle or mule roads indispensable for transporting food and other supplies from plains to the hill military posts. This compelled the administrators to give attention to the construction of road and communication in full mode. Almost in contemporaneous to the road construction, the importance of sustained essential supply both for the civil and military establishments came into place. The second challenge was definitely scarcity of rice supply in the hills. Shakespear in the Northern Lushai Hills and T.H Lewin in the South Lushai Hills were commendable for their interest and initiatives they took in wet-rice cultivation (*Leilet).*[100] The British felt the need to make *Leilet* an agricultural movement throughout the Lushai Hills District (Assam) after fully controlling the administration. This, they envisioned, would revolutionise the agricultural system and lead to food security.

In the riverine bazaar, the Lushais had transitioned from occasional raiders to full-time traders, but at the dawn of the 20th centuries they further advanced from mere forest produce traders and Jhumias to sedentary cultivators of wet-rice and sellers of agricultural products such as rice, sugarcane, cotton, fruits and so on. The transition of huge sections of Lushais from traditional dry (jhum) rice to wet-rice cultivators and traders of rice was engineered by certain factors such as sedentary wet-rice or *Leilet* (wet-land and terraced farming) movement, fall in transportation cost due to improved road connectivity and loan system introduced by the government. As rice is edible crop, trade in it was infrequent because it was produced mainly for subsistence. But transformation of the system of rice cultivation from jhuming to *Leilet* led to large scale production and marketization of rice.

Guha (1982)[101] wrote that wet-land cultivation had already been practised in Assam since the thirteenth century. The Ahoms were an advanced plough-using tribe since then

[100] Certain Lushais had already practised wet-rice before the British rule, though in a negligible scale. See MSA, Aizawl, Political Department, Pol-48, Cabin-5: From Major J. Shakespear, Superintendent, Lushai Hills, to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam, Dated Aijal, the 6th April 1904.
[101] Guha (1982): The Medieval Economy of Assam, in Tapan Raychaudhuri & Irfan Habib (eds).

(p.477). Prior to the Ahoms, there was the Buhyans, a non-tribal group in Assam, who had arms and controlled farmlands (p.478). The Ahoms replaced the hoe and stick culture of jhum with plough which indicated that wet-rice (*Sali*) replaced dry-rice (*abu/aus*) cultivation. This further explains that cultivators preferred transplantation technique to broadcasting of seeds in the method of rice cultivation. Such improved package in rice economy ensured increased productivity to sustain the rising population and the state apparatus, and also fight against rice shortage during famines. Over centuries, the process of political consolidation went side by side with that of social and economic through 'progressive sanskitisation and market links' (p.480).

How did grain trade evolve in the history of commerce? Roman Studer (2015)[102] identifies four geographical scales for commodities trade (especially grain trade) in pre-modern history—local, regional, interregional, and long-distance trades (p. 147). Unlike luxury or high-value goods, Studer argues that long-distance trade in commodities such as food grain developed late in Europe and even later in India. The "emergence of integrated commodity markets" is a critical moment in historical geography of any region. This is because at least two preconditions need to be fulfilled for this emergence: (a) low transport cost, and (b) the end of political fragmentation. Long distance trade in luxury goods did not require such preconditions. The question is: Did India achieve integrated commodity market before the British era? To quote Studer, 'World Theorists, Indian nationalists, or the 'California School,' which assert that markets in pre-British India were actually efficient and comparable to European markets, and that grain was a widely traded good' (p. 147). He disagreed with this assessment. Even for Europe, he argues that 'a truly European grain market' developed only by the late 19th century (p.147).

Goswami (1991) defines a commercial crop as any agricultural product that is wholly or partly sold in markets. According to him, rice or any other grains, may be a commercial crop so long as a part of the harvest is sold intentionally by the peasantry.[103] Dutta (2012)[104] deeply examined the pattern of commercialisation of rice in Burdwan district of colonial Bengal. Burdwan even earned the status of 'Rice bowl' of Bengal from the second half of the nineteenth to first half of the twentieth century. He identified the

[102] Studer (2015): *The Great Divergence Reconsidered Europe, India, and the Rise to Global Economic Power,*
[103] Goswami (1991): Commercialisation of Indian agriculture, 1900-1940: What do supply response functions say?
[104] Dutta, Achintya Kumar (2012): Rice Trade in the 'Rice Bowl' of Bengal: Burdwan 1880-1947.

factors of rice production and the medium of marketing within and outside Burdwan district. The essential factors, according to Dutt, of rice trade includes — resources (land and water), transportation networks, consumption centres, concentrated or integrated markets, merchant activities, and mechanisation (p.76). Transport networks especially road and railways in Bengal brought about the integration of Burdwan rice markets with other regional markets. Consequent upon the commercialisation of agricultural activities, rice had been extensively commercialised as it was particularly linked to road and railway connections. This infrastructural linkages enabled Burdwan traders to export rice outside the district like Calcutta, Serampore, Barrackpore, and also further outside Bengal province in Assam, Bombay, and Bihar (p.74). Interestingly, this profitable rice trade led to the introduction of agro-based industries in the region (south-west Bengal). The local merchants at Burdwan further invested their time and money in rice-milling industries supplied by the locally produced paddy. This 'merchant-cum-millers' carried on rice trade independently in the district (p.98). Further Dutta mapped three important stages of the movement of rice. First, the cultivators sold their paddy or hand-pounded rice to village merchants (*aratdars*) and to itinerant traders (*beparis*) which within the village or mostly at the rural markets (hats); second, parts of the sale went to retail shops and the rest to wholesalers or local rice-mills; lastly, paddy and rice moved out from all these 'assembling centres' to consuming centres within and outside the district of Burdwan as well as Bengal (p. 90-91). Rice trade in Burdwan had close link with that of Calcutta to export the crop to other parts of India and the world. (p.101).

In the context of Lushai Hills, Lalthansanga (2016) recently observed the changes in agricultural system where the government took initiatives in introducing and coordinating wet-rice and other crops cultivation in the pre- and colonial periods.[105] Later, the amalgamated Lushai Hills District (of Assam) was being fully introduced into the world of wet-rice cultivation by colonial rulers in the late nineteenth century transforming the age-old agricultural activities of jhum to a more advanced ploughing and irrigation system. This change in the culture of rice cultivation made the Lushais rice a market-oriented commodities, albeit relatively in small scale.

How is rice trade linked to improved means of transport and communication? Jackson (2016) points out that the Lushai people were connected to outside world through

[105] Lalthansanga (2016): Agricultural Administration and Its Coordination in Mizoram, 606-615.

'coerced construction' of roads, bridges and telegraph lines across the district. Roads in Lushai Hills connected the 'people and ecologies, linking trades in tangible and intangible goods'.[106] This road transformation and resultant new connection or *zawmzur* (in Mizo) significantly paved way for greater convenience in the flow and transportation of goods from one place to another in the Lushai Hills district. By the first quarter of the 20th century, almost all important locations of the Lushai Hills were well-connected to one another by roads ushering in significant advancement in communication and human interactions which Jackson expresses as 'globalising the India's borderland environment'.[107] This progress in road connectivity also signifies the beginning of the 'integration of commodity (rice) markets' within and those located outside the Lushai Hills.[108] The introduction and development of wet-rice cultivation mainly at Champhai and North Vanlaiphai which later diffused to other areas, was made possible by the presence of tentacles of roads across the Hills, particularly from the producing peripheries to market and various consumption centres in the Lushai Hills (Dutt 2012 & Studer 2016). Therefore, transport and rice trade are inseparable.

Whereas the riverine bazaars were set up as diplomatic tools by the British to stop the frequent disturbances on its citizens by the Lushais,[109] the road based bazaars in the interior Lushai Hills came up as a result of the establishment of British administration after the full conquest. This chapter shows the convergence of three important factors—improved roadways and *Leilet* (wet-rice cultivation) supported by state-sanctioned agricultural loans led to increase in rice production and rice marketization in the colonial Lushai Hills district (presently Mizoram state) of the Assam province in early twentieth century (Figure 2.1).

[106] Jackson, Kyle (2016): Globalizing an Indian Borderland Environment, 39-71
[107] Jackson, Kyle (2016).
[108] Studer, 147.
[109] Zou (2019): Riverine bazaars, trade and chiefs in the colonial Lushai Hills.

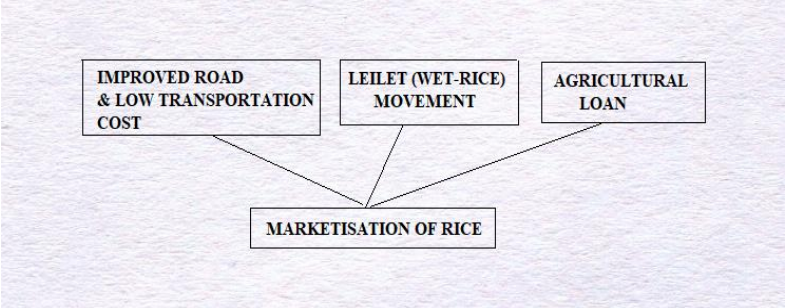

Figure 3.1: Factors of Rice Marketisation (commercialisation) in Lushai Hills

(Source: Prepared by author)

Road Communication: Reduced Transportation Cost

In the history of trade and commerce of the colonial Lushai Hills, road construction and wet-rice movement converged. At first, even the proposal for the amalgamation of the North and South Lushai Hills was objected by the Chief Commissioner of Assam on account of the backwardness of the Hills in matter of road. The reason for his objection of the amalgamation was the inaccessibility of such centres as Aijal and Lungleh and others from one another. The British government, therefore, took urgent steps to improve communications especially between Aijal and Lungleh in order to unite the two Lushai Hills regions.[110]

Unlike the river-way (Chapter 2), dependent on nature, road way is a state-built and dependent on the state. The river-ways that run into wild forested interiors of the hills are subject to occasional floods and droughts which hindered traffic on boats. They were also limited to weight of loads. For instance, there was reports of boat accidents in Dhaleswari River due to overloading of goods. And the administration fixed the limit of load a boat was permitted to carry to maximum 55 maunds.[111] Commodities such as food grains are cumbersome and need efficient mode of transport. Road gave the state officials and common traders a better alternative from solely depending on the mercy of nature. In river-way, location of rice cultivation and transportation was often determined by close proximity to the navigable rivers. Cultivators are mostly inclined to give priority to river

[110] NAI, Delhi, External –A, February 1898, No 69: Report of the Chin-Lushai Conference held at Lungleh in December 1896, From Offg. Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam, to the Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department, Shillong the 13th March 1897.
[111] McCall, A.G. (1980): *The Lushai Hills District Cover*, Aizawl, 261.

valleys or *Luikam phaizawl* [112]for either wet rice or jhum cultivation. However, construction of bridle roads had opened a new opportunity for farmers and traders to transport their produce to the marketplaces in bulk. For instance, Champhai and North Vanlaiphai *leilets* were not connected to any outlet markets by any navigable rivers (although they were flanked by local streams), but had a roadway on which pact animals (mules) were used for transport. So in Lushai Hills, since early 20th century, introduction of rice and rice trade essentially reflects a state-sponsored improvement of transport and communication connecting agricultural fields with marketplaces within and outside the hills.

Initially roads in the Lushai Hills were meant for effecting smooth communication lines and accessible supply of commodities to various British military posts. The government had no pre-conceived notion of its importance for the success of wet-rice movement. In March 1890, General Tregear proposed an efficient telegraph line between Demagiri to his Fort Tregear located several miles east of Lunglei military post. He demanded about 400 hill coolies from Darjeeling to carry out road construction work.[113] The permanent coolie corps in both the sub-divisions of Aizawl and Lunglei consisted mainly of Santhal tribes who were engaged along the existing tracks. In the following year (1891) the construction of road from Aizawl to Lunglei began under the district Superintendent, who also planned to upgrade the bridle path between Aijal and Sairang to a cart road.[114] Within short time, the government began to repair all the existing roads in the district. Some of the important road connections were Aizawl-Sairang, Sairang-Dwarband(Cachar), Aizwl-Serchhip, Aiawl-Champhai, Lunglei-Demagiri, and Lunglei-Haka roads which totalled around 500 miles. In1892, almost all these roads were passable for pack animals.[115]

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[112] For easy access of marketplaces outside Lushai Hills, Lushai cultivators used to encourage among themselves to do wet-rice or any other cash crop cultivation nearby river valleys known as *Luikam phaizawl* in Mizo. Before road commanded the links of communication, *Luikam*s were the ideal sites for cultivation and transportation. See MSA, Agricultural Department, Ag-20, Cabin No-2 dated 8/11/1918.

[113] NAI, Delhi, Foreign Dept., External-A, Proceedings August 1890, No. 246: From D.R. Lyall, Commissioner of the Chittagong Division to the Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal, No.375-H.T.—VIVI.-5, dated Chittagong, the 28th March 1890.

[114] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-9, CB-1: Administration Reports of Lushai Hills for the years 1891-92.

[115] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-9, Cabin No. 1: Administration Reports of Lushai Hills for the years 1891-92. Aijal-Champhai road was first traced by Mr Knight and is just ridable then.

Before roads were adequately improved, transportation of bulky goods was a luxury. From the Silchar and other bazaars located in the valleys such as Dwarband, rice was brought up to Changsil by river boats and then from Changsil to Aizawl by bullock portals owned by government contractors. Bullocks were used mostly for government's official as well as commercial transportation. However, bullock carriage was quite expensive. In 1893 about 400 bullocks were impressed for use in wet-rice cultivation and also carrying bulky goods such as rice and other grains. The cost of hiring bullock to carry rice from Changsil port to Aizawl town was Rs. 5 per maund which was not easily afforded by a *michhe* (common man). Therefore, A.W. Davis (Political Officer, North Lushai Hills) felt the need to open out a navigation between Changsil and Sairang for boat traffics and also develop Sairang-Aizawl road to pliable cart road to reduce the distance and cost of goods carriage.[116] As communication by boats in the Dhaleswari River between Jhalnacherra port (Cachar border) and Changsil (Lushai Hills) was frequently interrupted by heavy downpour of monsoon, the government gave a special attention to Rengti (Kolasib) road connecting Silchar with Aizawl headquarters. In 1893, the Rengti bridle road which was 146 miles from Silchar to Aizawl, was practically completed.[117] Till 1893 the following bridle roads were in existence in the whole Lushai Hills:

(a) Rengti (Kolasib) road of 146 miles that connected Aizawl with Silchar; practically completed; It was a good bridle road.
(b) Aizawl-Sairang bridle road of 12.5 miles connecting Aizawl with Sairang, was opened out to 3 feet wide, passable for pack animals.
(c) Aizawl-Lalbura (Champhai) of 20 miles bridle road was completed and still needed a good deal of work to put into order.
(d) Lunglei-Demagiri, which was 45 miles bridle path was fit for pack animals; and
(e) Lungleh-Tregear road, 45 miles bridle path, running east of Lungleh, was ready for pack animals.[118]

With the coming of all these bridle roads (3-6 feet wide), fit for mule pacts, there was no difficulty in carrying food grains and other essential supplies in the British northern

[116] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-318, CB-26: Administration Reports of Lushai Hills for the years 1892-93
[117] NAI, Delhi, Foreign Department, External-A, Proceeding August 1893: Political Report of the North Lushai Hills for 1892-93
[118] MSA Aizawl, General Department, G-18, CB-2: Report on the Administration of Lushai Hills 1892-93 by A.W. Davis, dated 15/11/1893.

posts–Kolasib, Sairang, Aizawl and Serchip— from Silchar. Lushai cultivators usually sold their rice to Serchip military post at Rs. 2 per maund. Lushais coolies were employed in transporting articles (such as food grains, essential items, and others) from Aizawl to Serchip where the cost of a coolie amounts to 2 per maund of rice. A.W. Davis also reported that the southern posts at Lunglei were supplied of various articles from Chittagong via Demagiri. However, the rice consumed at Vandula was supplied by local peasants and the government depended upon Lushai labourers for supplying the remaining food articles required by the military garrison and civilians.[119]

Further, the government planned to construct roadway to connect the eastern (Chin Hills) and southern (Arakan) neighbours of Lushai Hills. In 1899, a budget estimate of Rs. 17000 was proposed by the Political Officer of North Lushai Hills for a road construction between Aizawl and Falam (Chin Hills). This proposal was discussed at length in Lungleh Conference on November 1896 and was approved by the British-Burma government. Initially, the Political Officer at Aizawl contended that the Aizawl road should pass through Champhai, the 'rice bowl' of the Lushai Hills, because Champhai was geographically nearer to Tiddim rather than Falam. According to him, rice produce from Champhai could be exported to Chin Hills more conveniently from Champhai to Tiddim and then to Falam post. However, Tuck (the Political Officer of Chin Hills) opposed this idea. According to Tuck, the road would have to cut the main ranges of the hills at right angles and had to cross the deep Manipur River valley. Instead, he proposed a direct road connection from the Lushai Hills to Falam that should pass diagonally through the hills bypassing Tiddim without having to cross any deep gorge and valley on the way. He further stated that if the Aizawl-Falam road is to be made (instead of Tiddim as the terminus), it is necessary to choose a site for a bridge over the Tyao River (Lushai-Chin boundary), and this bridge would serve as the terminus of both sections –Aizawl and Falam. Conclusively, the officers attending the Conference at Lungleh marked certain portions referring to the proposed road from Aijal to Falam which was not similar to that of the Political Officer of North Lushai Hills. The conference resolved to make a mule track soon to connect Aiawl and Falam,

[119] MSA Aizawl, General Department, G-18, CB-2: Report on the Administration of Lushai Hills 1892-93 by A.W. Davis, dated 15/11/1893.

both districts' headquarters, which 'have large garrisons and the best transport, commissariat, financial and political resources'.[120]

Apart from economic use, the urgent need for administrative integration of the north and south Lushai Hills prompted the government to speed up the construction and improvement of road between Aizawl and Lunglei.[121] In 1897, just before the North and South Lushai Hills were amalgamated, Major Shakespeare (Officiating Political Officer of North Lushai Hills) wrote to the government of Assam about the urgency of giving utmost importance to the rapid construction of road between Aijal and Lungleh so that the administration of the southern hills from Aizawl would not face difficulty. Till then a bridle road from Aijal to Serchip was completed, which was later extended to Lunglei.[122] In early 1900s road links had been tremendously encouraged by appointment of 'star bureaucrats to village headmanships, installing more villages in a landscape of space already connecting'.[123] As road requires routine maintenance, from 1902 the government assigned *melvengs*, the permanently employed Mizos as road-repair workers, throughout the district to keep inter-village travel open. Then village heads were obliged to maintain portion of roads that were lying under their care or village boundaries, and were liable to fine if they fail to do so. The spade works were taken up by Santhal, Mugh and Mizo labourers and contractors.[124]

In 1903-1904 the administration in Lungleh impressed as many as 1622 coolies and 40 volunteers in the constructions of the Lunglei—Demagiri road; around 6400 coolies in Aizawl—Lunglei road, and 555 in Lunglei—Haka road. Aizawl—Lunglei was the toughest and longest road that involved the highest amount of time and labour among all. This road was extremely important for administrative purpose and for the integration of markets throughout the Lushai Hills. By the year 1908-1909, the government vigorously pursued the improvement of Sairang cart road and Lungleh-Demagiri bridle road. The government of India spent as much as Rs.30,137 and Rs.13,541 respectively on the two

[120] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-57, CB-5: From H.N. Tuck, Political Officer, Chin Hills, to the Chief Secretary to the Government of Burma, No.10, dated the 9th October 1897.
[121] NAI, Delhi, External –A, February 1898: No 69 Report of the Chin-Lushai Conference held at Lungleh in December 1896; From Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam, to the Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department, Shillong the 13th March 1897.
[122] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-39, CB-4: Administration Report the North Lushai Hills for the Year 1896-97, 3.
[123] Jackson, 42.
[124] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-177, CB-14, Administration Report for Lungleh, 1898–99; MSA, Aizawl, G-96, CB-8, 1. See Jackson, 42-43.

roads, and officially reported that both had been practically completed during that year. The two routes was apparently made in the effort to reduce carriage charges from the river port to the headquarters in the interior hills. An estimate of Rs.19,738 was further sanctioned for the construction guard walls and also for metalling certain portions of the cart road. The road was then opened for traffic. Improving and widening of the narrow portions of the Aizawl—North Vanlaiphai road, a wet-rice producing centre, was carried out with a sanctioned amount of Rs.2014. Besides, Major Loch's trace, between Champhai and North Vanlaiphai, the rice centres in the district, had also been constructed since then.[125]

Within 1908-09 the construction of Aizawl—Falam road via Champhai and Tyao River was not only completed, but ten miles of it from Aizawl had also been widened from previous three to six feet. This made the road pliable for bullock cart. Most often, the Circle Interpreters who were mostly literate Lushais were instrumental in fulfilling the imperial dreams of connecting every nook and corner of the Lushai Hills. Thangluaia, for instance, in 1906-1907 a state Circle Interpreter, who was formerly in the Survey Department, had considerably contributed his service to aligning and supervising the road work between Lungleh and Sherkor. He was noted 'to work really hard during the last 6 months and deserved a reward as an encouragement'.[126] Later in 1916, Tuipang military post, located near the southern tip of Lushai Hills, was connected with the Lunglei—Haka road.[127]In 1926 Tuipang to Lungdaw, 32 miles distance, was connected by three feet wide bridle path. Lungdaw was the farthest navigation point located at the Kolodyne River connecting the Lushai Hills with the Arakan hills in extreme southern part of the district. Lungdaw had a locational advantage of opening trade connection between the Lushai Hills and the Arakan hills of Burma.[128]

[125] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-160, CB-13: Annual Administration Report of the Lushai Hills for the year 1908-1909.
[126] MSA, Aizawl, General and Political Department: Notes for the Administration Report, Lungleh Subdivision, 1906-07.
[127] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-237, CB-19: Notes for the Administration Report of Lungleh Sub-Division for the year 1915-16.
[128] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-359, CB-29: Eastern Bengal and Assam Province, Public Works Department; 'Providing of a 3 ft. wide bridle path Lungleh-Tuipang road to Lungdaw (Kolodyne River)', framed by Lalchhinga, Officiating Sub-Overseer, Lungleh, dated 30/5/1926.

Since early 1900s, ponies and bullocks were imported into the Lushai Hills. While ponies were used as pack animals bullocks were used as both pack and plough animals.[129] Later on bullock wagons (carts) began to be used as the means of carrying heavy and large quantities of goods.[130] This indicates that roads had been improved from bridle path to cart road, and some part maintained to metalled road with guard walls for safe plying of bullock wagons.[131] By the year 1933, the road construction department at Aizawl had been actively engaged in preparing an estimate for a cart road, probably motorable road for car traffic, between Dwarband (Cachar) and Aizawl. The Superintendent opined that Lungleh Sub-Division could also be far better controlled by Aijal than by Rangamatti (Chittagong) if the plan was successful. He believed that the road estimate would turn out to be successful and that the road would be even comparable to either the Shillong-Guwahati-Dimapur or Shillong-Sylhet roads.[132] So in this way military pony trails were converted to larger bridle paths; and bridle paths were then extended to cart roads. Since riverine navigation is mostly seasonal, and not fully dependable in difficult terrains, efficient road communication was crucial for the success of rice transportation. The progress in road communication unintendedly helped the progress of *Leilet* (wet-rice) movement in the colonial Lushai Hills.

[129] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-81, CB-7: Notes for Administration Report, Lungleh, 1900–01, 21. See Jackson, p. 60.
[130] Jackson, 53.
[131] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-160, CB-13: Annual Administration Report of the Lushai Hills for the year 1908-1909. A financial estimate was made to upgrade the Aijal-Sairang cart road to metalled road with guard wall within these periods. It is expected to have been completed soon after few years.
[132] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-511, CB-40: From Office of the Superintendent, Lushai Hills, to O. Callaghan, Inspector General of Police, Assam, dated Camp, Lungleh, the 29th January 1933.

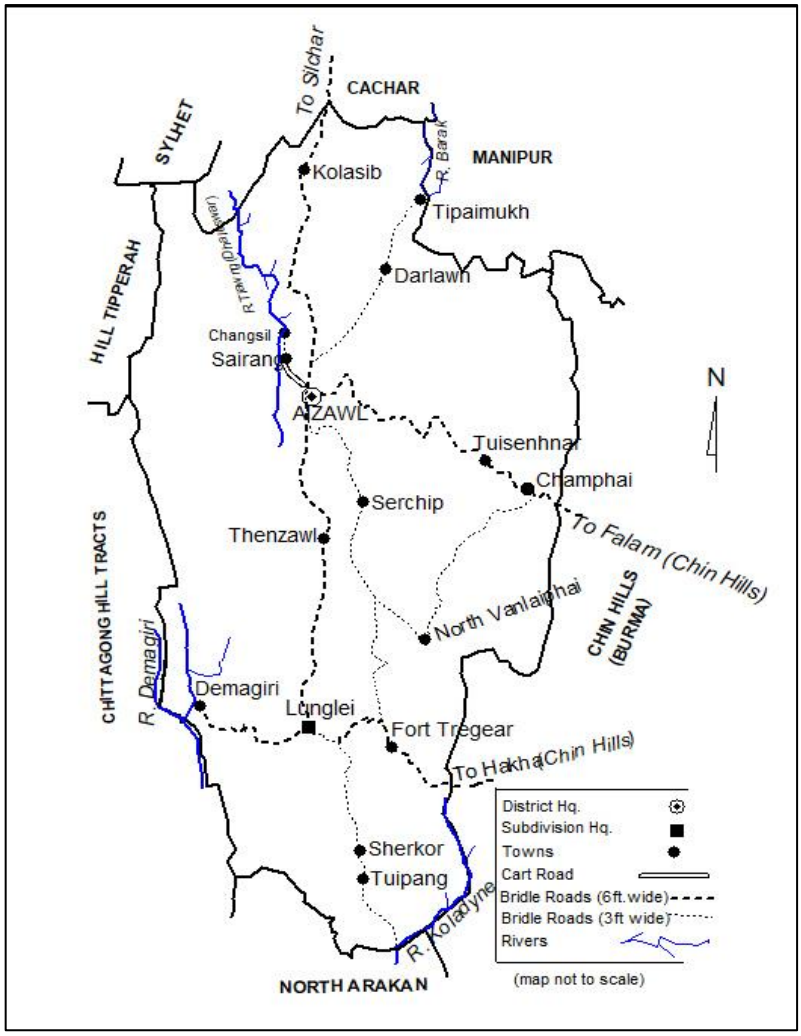

Figure 3.2: Roads in Lushai Hills, c.1935. ***(Source: Prepared by author)***

Leilet Movement

Leilet is a Lushai (Mizo) term which literally means 'to plough the land or soil', suggesting wet-rice cultivation. Major Shakespeare (Superintendent of Lushai Hills since 1897) recorded that there was a Lushai farmer named Lalsanga whose forefathers had cultivated and grew rice at Champhai fields by using bullocks and plough. But such an isolated case does not attract the ethnographic writings till today. However, this indicates that wet-rice cultivation was not entirely new to the Lushais as some Lushais had already practiced before the British started its introduction and development in large scale.[133] There also as

[133] MSA, Aizawl, Political Department, Pol- 48, CB-5: From Major J. Shakespear, Superintendent, Lushai Hills, to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam, dated Aijal, the 6th April 1904.

a sketchy note on the practice of Leilet by people settled near Demagiri valleys in the southern Lushai Hills before the formal annexation by the British.[134]

British administrators had the intention of changing the socio-economic condition of the Lushais by initiating policies and steps to improve rice cultivation. After the British conquest of the Lushai Hills, *Leilet* or wet-rice cultivation fully received official sanction. Hence, Champhai and North Vanlaiphai areas were first selected as the experimental grounds for *Leilet*. At Champhai, an ex-sepoy named Sugrim Bahadur Thapa was the first person who began *Leilet* in his own *khet* (paddy field). He also trained some Lushais to undertake *Leilet* and grow rice under the direction of Shakespeare.[135] A local scholar reported,

> […]Wet-rice cultivation in the three areas such as Champhai, N. Vanlaiphai and Thenzawl received colonial sanction and encouragement after the consolidation of British rule in the Lushai Hills. Unlike Tlabung which was located in the remote area of South Lushai Hills, those three areas were constantly visited by colonial officers such as J. Shakespear, G.H. Loch and Alexander Porteous, who were active in producing and maintaining records concerning all matters of importance either officially or unofficially.[136]

In the Lushai Hills, like the Assam valleys and vast tracts of Khasi-Jaintia Hills, the British had conceived the idea of introducing wet-rice since they fully conquered in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Major Shakespear intended to introduce *Leilet* among jhum cultivators and other farmers to mitigate the problem of food scarcity often brought about by erratic monsoon in the hills. In 1897, Shakespear observed that the year's rainfall fell short of average of the previous five years by about 21.78 inches, or nearly 25 percent decline. The rain ceased abruptly at the close of September 1896 that the rice crop (mainly jhum rice) in the district suffered considerably as a consequence. So the outturn was not satisfactory.[137]Thus over dependence on the mercy of monsoon for rice production to feed

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[134] T. H. Lewin was the Superintendent of Chittagong Hill Tracts in the early 1870s. He obtained imperial sanction and financial assistance to purchase ploughs, cattle and other tools for cultivation of wet rice in the surrounding Demagiri valleys. See Lewin, T.H. 1912, *A Fly On The Wheel Or How I Helped To Govern India*, Tribal Research Institute, Art & Culture Department, Aizawl, Mizoram, p.294.
[135] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-160, CB-13: Annual Administrative Report of the Lushai Hills for the year 1908 – 1909.
[136] Lalzuimawia (2016), *John Shakespear in the Lushai Hills*, 195.
[137] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-39, CB-4: Administration Report of the North Lushai Hills for the Year 1896-97, 1.

the rising population, (including the colonial population) demanded for introduction of more advanced and improved method of cultivation. *Leilet* caught immediate attention as Champhai and surrounding areas are topographically conducive to it.[138]

Besides, the need to scale up local production of food grains in the Lushai Hills was factored by occasional *Mautam* (famines) that occurred in the recent pasts. In the early 1880s, the famine that plagued the hills had forced Lushai chiefs to sell out their ivories, jewelleries, and other materials for the sake of food, and they lost large number of their population from diseases and desertion. *Jhums* were unproductive, and rubber trade had ended due to over-tapping. Lushais had no means to get money for purchasing their required articles such as salt, tobacco, clothes, rice, and others.[139] Jhum were vulnerable to environmental tragedies such as landslide, excessive run-off, and soil degradation losing the fertility. Shakespear further reported,

> […]The land on which tree jungle grows is much joomed, the tree jungle is soon killed and gives place to coarse tall grass, and cultivation continues. Only small crops of rice can be obtained. This has happened round Darbilli's village, and also on the eastern slope of the Blue.[140]

Therefore need arose for the British to innovate and encourage the local peasants to change the method of cultivation in order to stand against any contingency.

The need for improving rice productivity in the Lushai Hills also stemmed from military consideration which was conceived before the full annexation. In 1890, D.R. Lyall (Commissioner of Chittagong Division) highlighted the importance of encouraging settlers near the military posts in the interior Lushai Hills to 'bring in rice and vegetables in exchange for salt'.[141] Then A.W. Davis reported that the food supplies for the northern

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[138] Shakespear described that Champhai is located at the western part of Lushai Hills, relatively a plain and open areas at an elevation of about 4, 800 feet, with an average rainfall of about 70 – 80 inches. It lies a few miles to the west of the Tiau (Tyao) River bordering Chin Hills and is located 91 miles from Aizawl. Champhai plain consists of two portions and resembles a tadpole with rather a long tail considerably curved to the north – west. The main portion of the plain representing the head and body of the tadpole is about two and half miles by two. The tail is about three miles long, varying in width one mile and few yards. Besides these two main divisions, there are several valleys branching off. The soil was very fertile since the alluvial soil from the adjoining hills deposited in that valley. It was well watered by the sources of the Tuipui River, which runs through the plain, rising at its southern end and escaping at the north-east end through a gorge (Lalzuimawia, 2016), 197.

[139] Chatterjee, Suhas (1985), *Mizoram Under the British Rule*, 96.

[140] NAI, Delhi, Foreign Department, External –A, Pros. October 1894, Nos. 221: Administration Report, South Lushai Hills, 1893-94, 18.

[141] NAI, Delhi, Foreign Department, External –A, Pros. August 1890, No.240: Arrangement for Military Control of Chin Lushai Country, 12.

Lushai military posts such as Kolasib, Sairang, and Aizawl were brought from Silchar, whereas the Serchip post was supplied of all food items from Aizawl except rice which was taken from local sellers or cultivators. Davis further stated that all the southern posts needed to be supplied from Chittagong for various food articles, but rice needed to be locally purchased due to transportation predicament. Coolies (labourers) were easily available for carrying food articles such as salts, ghee, dall, and so on, but not for cumbersome ones like rice as road connection was extremely poor then.[142] In regard to scarcity of local rice supply and emphasis on unreliable *jhum*, Davis expressed,

> During the rains…nearly every village in the North Lushai Hills ran short of rice and the inhabitants subsisted on roots and other product of the jungle. Whether this is the normal condition of the people I cannot say rather suspect that is so judging from the small extent of their jhums…[143]

On account of rice scarcity, Davis abstained from collection of rice as tribute from the Lushai villages unlike the Naga villages in the Naga Hills. The Lushai themselves badly needed adequate food supplies.[144] Since the area of land suitable for *jhuming* decreased year after years and could soon get exhausted, permanent wet-rice cultivation in the form of terrace and lowland paddy were respectively needed and are topographically viable in the inter-mountain plains and moderate hill slopes.[145] Interestingly, the Superintendent of Lushai Hills appeared more concerned than the local people about the ongoing depletion of lands for *jhum*. In 1912, the government gave firm instructions to the Lushai chiefs to discourage *jhuming* in the country-sides and informed that 'in future no chief need apply to me for new land for jhuming unless he can show that all lands within his ram suitable for permanent cultivation have been utilised'.[146]

When Shakespeare was appointed the Superintendent of Lushai Hills (in 1897), he visited Champhai in 1898 and introduced wet-rice cultivation there. He settled ten Santhal

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[142] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-18, CB-2: Annual Report of North Lushai Hills, for the Year 1893-94, by A.W. Davis, dated the 15th November, 1893, 18-19.
[143] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-18, CB-2: Annual Report of North Lushai Hills, for the Year 1893-94, by A.W. Davis, dated the 15th November, 1893, 19-20.
[144] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-18, CB-2: Annual Report of North Lushai Hills, for the Year 1893-94, by A.W. Davis, dated the 15th November, 1893, 20.
[145] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-196, CB-16: Copy of Letters on Subject of Methods of Cultivation in the Lushai Hills, by the Superintendent of Lushai Hills, Dated Aijal, the 24th December 1912.
[146] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-196, CB-16: Copy of Letters on Subject of Methods of Cultivation in the Lushai Hills, by the Superintendent of Lushai Hills, Dated Aijal, the 24th December 1912.

labourers from his transport corps from the plains to demonstrate the advantage and techniques of wet-rice to the Lushais. He also lent some bullocks for plough from Col. Loch from Assam.[147] In 1902, there was an increase in demand for bullocks from *Leilet* owners from Champhai. Official reports showed that over eighteen agricultural land owners purchased more than sixty bullocks from three suppliers at Sairang. Some of the prominent *Leilet* village-chiefs at Champhai who received bullocks — Laitea, Sanga, Lalsanga, Vanhuaikhuma and others— acknowledged to Shakespear that they received the bullocks from Suaka, the Circle *Chaprasi* (Interpreter).[148] The three bullock suppliers in Sairang were Ghayaddin Bhajira, Hira Nunia and Dhani Ram Chetri.[149] As located at the head of navigable river Tlawng (Dhaleswari) and connecting the plains of Cachar with the Hills by water way, Sairang became an important central-place for Lushai farmers to obtain various tool supplies for use in *Leilet*.

Champhai, North Vanlaiphai and Thenzawl areas (even at present), have topographical advantage for wet-rice cultivation. The relatively low altitude and undulating hills and narrow valleys in the eastern corners of Lushai Hills gave opportunity to the cultivators to adopt wet-rice cultivation apart from the existing *jhum* culture. Topographically Champhai had an elevation of about 4,800 feet, wide open space with annual average rainfall of about 70 – 80 inches.[150] An earlier report states:

> Champhai, Northern and Southern Vanlaiphais, Thenzawl and the valleys of Tuishen and Tipaimukh in the Lushai Hills…Those valleys are about the height of those around Shillong, and like the latter, should go good rice. The introduction of settled cultivation will be of great benefit to the country side.[151]

In regard to the North Vanlaiphai landscape, Shakespear had once aptly described,

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[147]MSA, Aizawl, Political Department, Pol-48, CB-5: No. 13G. from Major J. Shakespear, Superintendent, Lushai Hills, to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam, dated Aijal, the 6th April 1904.
[148] MSA, Aizawl, Agriculture Department, Agr-31, CB-3: Statement Showing Distribution of Bullocks Purchase for Champhai Cultivation, 1902-03; and
[149] MSA, Aizawl, Agriculture Department, Ag-31, CB-3: Statement Showing Distribution of Bullocks Purchase for Champhai Cultivation, from Suaka, Champhai.
[150] MSA, Aizawl, Political Department, Pol-48, CB-5: No. 13G. From Major J. Shakespear, Superintendent, Lushai Hills, to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam, dated Aijal, the 6th April 1904.
[151] MSA, Aizawl, Agriculture Department, Agr-8, Cabin No. 1: From the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam, to the Superintendent, Lushai Hills, Dated Shillong, the 18th May 1904. Cited in Lalzuimawia (2016), *John Shakespear in the Lushai Hills*,195

> Small valleys, their sides covered with oak trees, run out of the main valley in all directions; none of these are not yet explored. The level of the main valley is about 4,000 feet above sea level, it is level, open and watered by the Tuiphai stream which rises at the northern end. There would not be the slightest difficulty in flooding the valley and terraces which could easily be cut on the sides, which slope very gradually, so that large quantities of rice could be grown.[152]

The Lushais had been busy with wet-rice cultivation since 1901.[153] Shakespear introduced varieties of rice he bought from Manipur, Silchar and Sylhet at Champhai and North Vanlaiphai fields. He also encouraged the Lushais to practise mixed cropping such as wheat, pulse, potato and other crops in the flat and terraced lands.[154] By the year 1904 about thirty-seven households were engaged in wet rice cultivation at Champhai valley, and they were able to sell about 110 maunds of rice to the armed force at Champhai military outpost. Wheat cultivation had also been introduced in the same year along with other cereal crops.[155]

After Shakespear, the succeeding superintendents of Lushai Hills such as Major Cole, Mr. Dundas and Colonel Loch, promoted wet-rice cultivation extensively by the 1900s.[156] By January 1907 the British government did not allow the formation of any more village sites. Crop instructors were posted to give minute instructions of wet-rice methods to the cultivators. By the year 1909, Major Cole (Superintendent of Lushai Hills), completed the construction of channel irrigations for the wet-rice fields in Champhai and North Vanlaiphai. In the January 1909, Major Cole initiated privatisation of the paddy fields to individual cultivators.[157] Related to this, certain rules were laid down by Cole that the chiefs or headmen needed to comply.[158] Flat lands were split up for wet-rice fields among the headmen with fixed boundaries for each village. The boundaries were marked

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[152] MSA, Aizawl, Political Department, Pol-48, CB-5: Diary of Captain J. Shakespear, D.S.O., Leinster Regiment, Superintendent, South Lushai Hills, from the 15th to the 21st January 1984. Cited in Lalzuimawia (2016), *John Shakespear in the Lushai Hills*, 200.
[153] Mc.Call (1980), *The Lushai Hills District Cover*, 103
[154] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G–73, CB-6: No. 904 G: from Major John Shakespear, Superintendent, Lushai Hills, to the Provincial Superintendent, Gazetteer Revision, Assam, dated Aijal, the 24th December 1902.
[155] MSA Aizawl, Political Department, Pol-48, CB-5, No. 13G: from Major J. Shakespear, Superintendent, Lushai Hills, to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam, dated Aijal, the 6th April 1904.
[156] McCall, A.G (1980), 103.
[157] MSA, Aizawl, Agriculture Department, Ag-14, CB-1: 'Rice Cultivation at North Vanlaiphai and Champhai'. From Major H.W.G. Cole, Superintendent of Lushai Hills, to the Director of Agriculture, Eastern Bengal and Assam, Shillong. Through the Commissioner Surma Valley and Hill Districts, Dated Aijal, the 11th September 1909.
[158] McCall (1980), *The Lushai Hills District Cover*, 103

clearly by *dhips* (channels) and branches of trees stuck to ground which were witnessed by the persons concerned. This fragmentation of land for *Leilet* is made for the first time in the history of Lushai Hills.[159] Firstly nine headmen applied for this *Leilet* in Champhai and one in North Vanlaiphai. The government passed official orders with regard to the land allocation at Champhai and Vanlaiphai which came into force since 1st January 1909. The names of the headmen or chiefs in Champhai were: Singbir Jemadar, Vahnuaikhuma, Lalsanga, Lalluia, Butpawla, Laitea, Sanga, Hlawnchina, and Thangthiauva.[160] At North Vanlaiphai, Vira was the first Lushai chief to be placed in charge of wet-rice cultivation since1904 till 1915.[161]

The main aim of privatisation of Leilet, as expressed by Major Cole, was 'to ensure every individual the fruit of his labours', indicating an adequate amount of rice produce for which a cultivator put effort. More importantly, it signifies private ownership of land to every cultivator too.[162] The chief or headman had no power to confiscate lands owned or cultivated by any individual. Such right to own private land was expected to discourage families from shifting their settlements from time to time as practiced in the jhum system. A cultivator would have to sacrifice all the hard labours he invested if he or she simply abandoned his village. This new rule, however, also gave a cultivator the liberty to shift his village due to genuine reasons such as inevitable differences that might arise with the headman or chief. It says,

> […]While preserving Lushai custom as much as possible to make a compromise which will ensure to each cultivator the fruit of his labours and at the same time leave him free to change his village if he wishes to do so for family reasons or on account of difference with his chief.[163]

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[159] MSA, Aizawl, Agriculture Department, Ag-14, CB-1: 'Rice Cultivation at North Vanlaiphai and Champhai'. From Major H.W.G. Cole, Superintendent of Lushai Hills, to the Director of Agriculture, Eastern Bengal and Assam, Shillong. Through the Commissioner Surma Valley and Hill Districts, Dated Aijal, the 11th September 1909.
[160] MSA, Aizawl, Agriculture Department, Ag-14, CB-1: 'Rice Cultivation at North Vanlaiphai and Champhai'. From Major H.W.G. Cole, Superintendent of Lushai Hills, to the Director of Agriculture, Eastern Bengal and Assam, Shillong. Through the Commissioner Surma Valley and Hill Districts, Dated Aijal, the 11th September 1909.
[161] Mc.Call (1980), *The Lushai Hills District Cover*, 103, 111.
[162] MSA, Aizawl, Agriculture Department, Agr-14, CB-1: 'Rice Cultivation at North Vanlaiphai and Champhai'. From Major H.W.G. Cole, Superintendent of Lushai Hills, to the Director of Agriculture, Eastern Bengal and Assam, Shillong. Through the Commissioner Surma Valley and Hill Districts, Dated Aijal, the 11th September 1909.
[163] MSA, Aizawl, Agriculture Department, Agr.-14, Cabin No. 1: 'Rice Cultivation at North Vanlaiphai and Champhai'. From Major H.W.G. Cole, Superintendent of Lushai Hills, to the Director of Agriculture,

In normal case if any cultivator wanted to change his residence to another village he needed permission from that village chief. He had to pay *Fathang* (tribute) at the rate of two baskets of rice per annum to each chief within whose village he resides and within whose boundary he cultivated. Such arrangement offered freedom to cultivator to leave his village without losing his original *Leilet* field. A remarkable point that confirms the permanency of land ownership by individuals reads,

> Every cultivator in either Champhai or Vanlaiphai who cultivates wet-rice does so on the understanding that the fields he makes, purchases, or acquires are his personal and heritable property and that no one can deprive him.[164]

Besides, the land owner had the right to lease out his land to others. As the initial period of working on the fallow demanded huge labour, cultivators were exempted from paying tax or *Fathang* to the chiefs for the first three years.[165] In case any farmer was not able sow seeds on the fields on account of physical sickness or any other reason, it was in the discretion of the chief or headman to arrange for any other cultivator to fill the gap. The new cultivator had to pay one-fourth of the produce to the land owner. However, if a field remained uncultivated for two years in succession all rights of ownership would cease unless the owner (original cultivator) obtained the Government's consent in writing.

Maj. Cole stated such system of land holding was inspired by those in the Naga Hills where terraced rice fields belonged to individuals. Such system of cultivation had already existed since time immemorial among the Nagas. It was also already practised in the Sadar Subdivision of Khasi and Jaintia Hills before the advent of the British. But in the case of Lushais, wet-rice cultivation commenced after the initiative taken up by the government by assisting the people in money (or rice) and bullocks, as loans, and instructing the techniques to them. In August 1910, for instance, the Superintendent of Lushai Hills recorded that around 84 bags (*dawrawn* in Lushai) of Manipuri rice which cost Rs. 168 were given to various headmen of Leilet villages near Aijal.[166] Superintendent

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Eastern Bengal and Assam, Shillong. Through the Commissioner Surma Valley and Hill Districts, Dated Aijal, the 11th September 1909.

[164] MSA, Aizawl, Agriculture Department, Ag-14, CB-1: 'Rice Cultivation at North Vanlaiphai and Champhai'. From Major H.W.G. Cole, Superintendent of Lushai Hills, to the Director of Agriculture, Eastern Bengal and Assam, Shillong. Through the Commissioner Surma Valley and Hill Districts, Dated Aijal, the 11th September 1909.

[165] *Leilet*, a Mizo term, refers to wet-land or wet-rice cultivation. *Leilet* hamlet or village refers to group of houses a particular site engaged mainly in wet-rice cultivation.

[166] MSA, Aizawl, Agriculture Department, Ag-15, CB-1: List of Persons supplied Manipuri Dhan

Cole further expressed: 'It is known that some individuals were enterprising enough to inspire confidence sufficient to attract followers and established *Leilet* hamlets as in the case of Butpawla, Laitea and others at Champhai'. [167]

Expansion of Leilet: Land Reclamation

In November 1911, famine (*Mautam*) occurred in the whole Lushai Hills. The crops of rice which should have been reaped in November–December was almost destroyed by rats.[168] An official report stated that Aizawl and its surrounding areas had faced rice scarcity, and had to import rice for relief work from Silchar.[169] Food scarcity caused by famine coupled with the lack of advanced technology in *jhum* cultivation was also an important factor behind the introduction and the expansion of *Leilet* movement in the Lushai Hills. The *mautam* famine lasted for a couple of years. But the people had to prepare for the next round of unforeseen famine in future.[170] The government of the Lushai Hills had been inspired by the success of *Leilet* in Champhai and North Vanlaiphai. It considered to expand the movement by reclaiming suitable lands in other parts of the Hills.

In 1912, the Subdivisional Officer of Lunglei reported that the South Vanlaiphai areas had also been brought under wet-rice cultivation.[171] Till then there were at least 10 families cultivating the lands whereas sufficient area of land was still available for over 25 families to do *Leilet*. The Subdivisional Officer (SDO) expressed about his policy to bring the whole area under cultivation in the following agricultural season. For this, he helped the cultivators in the form of advances or rice stock (loans) for seeds. Even the Officer himself firstly acquired a plot of land (1 square mile) on the government's behalf where he

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[167] MSA, Aizawl, Agriculture Department, Ag-14, CB-1: 'Rice Cultivation at North Vanlaiphai and Champhai'. From Major H.W.G. Cole, Superintendent of Lushai Hills, to the Director of Agriculture, Eastern Bengal and Assam, Shillong. Through the Commissioner Surma Valley and Hill Districts, Dated Aijal, the 11th September 1909.

[168] Nag (2008): Pied Pipers in North-East India, 137.

[169] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-193, CB-16: From Office of the Superintendent, Lushai Hills, to Deputy Commissioner, Cachar, Dated 20th September 1911.

[170] Famine occurred again in 1929 in Lushai Hills. Rat-famine or *Mautam* occurs due to flowering of bamboos bearing fruits. This flowering and fruition cycle takes place one in thirty, fifty or even hundred and twenty years in the Lushai Hills. The jungle rats breed and multiply its population by eating the fruit. Then they come overground after eating up all the fruits to attack any standing crops in their paths (Sajal Nag, 23, 24 & 136).

[171] Whereas the North Vanlaiphai Circle lay under the administration of the Aijal Sub-Division, the South Vanlaiphai and Thenzawl were under the Lungleh Sub-Division of the district.

sew about 10 *seers* of Manipuri Rice. He intended to distribute the out turn to other cultivators for primary seeds in their respective fields.[172]

In 1917, the Lunglei Officer further emphasized the importance of introducing wet-rice cultivation in slope terrains (terraced field) in his jurisdictional areas. He pointed out two wet-rice cultivations being carried out: one at Nghasih Valley and the other at Rasi Veng in the subdivision. The former was done on flat land and the latter on low lying hills as terraced farm. Like the Champhai and North Vanlaiphai areas, they also sowed the paddy varieties of Manipur Valley and Naga Hills successfully. Since the initial stage of making terrace farms was tough and challenging, the Lushais were reluctant to begin the work. However, he ensured them that he would take all the necessary steps and give helps to the cultivators to make the experiment a success. He further suggested that wet-rice in the form of terrace cultivation or lowland paddy was the only options available to increase production and prevent frequent shifting of settlements. This is indicative of the fact that as farmers produce more than sufficient amount of food grains, they would normally lead a sedentary life. He wrote,

> Jhuming land near Lungleh is getting scarcer every year and unless terraced cultivation is resorted to people will *pem* (migrate) to more distant villages where land is good. This latter contingency should be avoided if possible.[173]

In Aizawl subdivision too, many Lushais villagers took keen interest in *Leilet* for a reliable livelihood. Many Chiefs were encouraged to introduce permanent cultivation in their *ram* (land). The search for potential locations began all over the Lushai Hills. However, the government made mandatory for the cultivators to obtain permission to own new lands for *Leilet.* The government also appointed Kishan Roy, a Bengali agricultural demonstrator, to supervise land reclamation, and instructed him to persuade more Lushais to shift from *jhum* to *Leilet*. Besides, Roy's role was to recommend the applications of the Lushai farmers to the administration in Aizawl. Apart from Roy, several government

[172] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-198, CB-16: Notes on Administration Report, Lungleh Sub-Division, 1910-1911, dated the 8th April 1911.
[173] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-217, CB-18: Administration Report of Lungleh Sub-division for the year 1916-17.

officials especially the Circle Interpreters (CIs) were appointed for the task of finding new locations for *Leilet* and report to the Superintendent of the District.[174]

In November 1918 Kishan Roy reported to the Superintendent about the availability of lands for *Leilet* in the *ram* of chief Lalluova of Tlungvel village within Aizawl Subdivision. He was able to persuade the chief to take up *Leilet*. Lalluova cooperated with the demonstrator and found two places suitable for wet-rice cultivation in eastern part of Lushai Hills. One small plot was located at *Minpui-Luikam-Zawl* (bank of Minpui stream) measuring about 2.5 acres in area. It was an old jhum land lately where dry or *jhum* rice was cultivated. The Minpui stream draining the area was an ideal source of irrigation for the new found land.[175] The other plot, much wider than the previous one, was situated at a hill-forest known as *Rawkai-Chhuah-Zawl* (East Rawkai range) at the bank of Tuirini stream. This plot was wide enough for the villagers of Tlungvel to make *Leilet*.[176] Both places lied within the lands of two different Lushai chiefs—chiefs Lalluova and Lallhinga. They were separated by a stream which marked the boundary of the two chiefs' territories. Chief Lalluova was more ambitious in expanding his territory. He attempted to convince Roy that as his counterpart Lallhinga was reluctant to carry out Leilet he would be eager to take Lalhinga's land for his villagers to cultivate. However, Roy maintained that as the spot lie nearer to Lallhinga's village, the latter had to take it for wet-rice cultivation.[177]

Kishan Roy was further successful in bringing in the Lushai peasants from jhum to *Leilet*. An official report shows that within a period of twelve years (1916-28), about 49 Lushai households applied to the Superintendent of Lushai Hills for *Leilet*. The year 1916, saw the highest number of individuals applying for *Leilet*, and the following years saw decreasing trends (Table 3.1).[178]

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[174] MSA, Agriculture Department, Ag-20, CB-2: Letter to the Superintendent, from Kishan Roy, Agriculture Instructor, Dated Aijal, the 8th November 1918.
[175] MSA, Agriculture Department, Ag-20, CB-2: Letter to the Superintendent, from Kishan Roy, Agriculture Instructor, Dated Aijal, the 8th November 1918.
[176] MSA, Agriculture Department, Ag-20, CB-2: Letter to the Superintendent, from Kishan Roy, Agriculture Instructor, Dated Aijal, the 8th November 1918.
[177] MSA, Agriculture Department, Ag-20, CB-2: Letter to the Superintendent, from Kishan Roy, Agriculture Instructor, Dated Aijal, the 8th November 1918
[178] MSA, Aizawl, Agriculture Department, A-20, CB-2: 'Application for cultivating lands for wet-rice (leilet) cultivation, 1916-39'. Applications were made to the Superintendent of Lushai Hills through Kishan Roy who recommended the applications to the former by describing the feasibility, advantages and disadvantages of the applied lands.

Table 3.1: Number of applicants for Leilet in Lushai Hills, 1916-28

Year	1916	1917	1918	1919	1928	1929
No. of applicants	17	14	3	2	2	11

Source: MSA, Aizawl, Agriculture Department, A-20, Cabin No. 2

In 1918, Roy reported to the Superintendent about the places, sizes of plots, number of possible households for wet-rice cultivation at a place located within the Aizawl Subdivision (Table 2). Since Lushai Hills (Mizoram) has mostly rugged terrain, larger portion of land was suitable for terrace far than lowland paddy cultivation.

Table 3.2: Statement showing possible areas for Terrace and Lowland Paddy, 1918

Sl. No.	Name of places	Distances from main villages located nearby	No. of houses in the village	No. of houses that can be supported		Remark
				Terracing	*Pure Leilet*	Total house
1	Bawktlang	3.5 miles	186	About nil	22	22
2	Hualtu	2-5 miles	150	About 86	34	120
3	Hmuntha	2 miles	85	About 30	15	45
4	Khawlul	3 miles	69	About 27	15	42
5	Bukpui	1 mile	3	Nil	5	5
6	Bawngchawm	3 miles	68	About 5	20	25
7	Serchip	3.5 miles	95	About 5	28	33

Note: Calculation is about 3-4 acres (as on fing) for a house or family.
Source: MSA Aizawl, Agriculture Department, Agr-20, Cabin No. 2

Roy further explained that Hualtu, Hmuntha and Khawlul sites situated on the range of Toi and Tleu Tlang (hills) which are adjacent to each other. The Toi Tlang is the highest peak in the Subdivision of Aizawl. In these hill ranges, there were more plots suitable for terrace cultivation with several irrigable streams. The chiefs and *upas* (village elders) of these places were willing to take up the *Leilet* work as per conditions set by the Superintendent. At the plots Hualtu and Khawlul the people and the chiefs were more interested in carrying out terrace cultivation than lowland paddy, and the distance between each other was about 10 to 12 miles. Roy further reported that the two plots are officially taken up that year (1918) itself. But the people reported to him that since they had already cut their jhums and the slashes were ready to be burnt, they were too busy to begin *Leilet* on that year. However, Roy let them to begin it on four to five acres of land with the help of an Angami instructor.[179]

[179] MSA Aizawl, Agriculture Department, Ag-20, CB-2.

When the *Bawrsap* (Lushai meaning of Superintendent) officially opened permission to do *Leilet* in Lushai Hills many Lushais set out to reclaim available lands across the district. Some of them even wrote down their experiences in printed journals to encourage other Lushais. In March issue of *Mizo and Vai Chanchin Bu* (a vernacular monthly journal) Huatkunga, a Lushai compounder in Aizawl, wrote about his explored land for *Leilet* at Bawktlang near Thenzawl in central part of the Lushai Hills. This land was believed to sustain forty to fifty households for *Leilet*. He emphasised *Leilet* as an instrument available to fight against the seasonal famine that usually befell the Lushai people. In fact, famine was expected to recur in the hills in the near future too.[180] He further wrote,

> *Leilet* should not be under estimated. He who dislikes Leilet does not have enthusiasm for jhuming either. This place (Bawktlang) would be the best one for *Leilet* in. By using boat transport we could reach the *Vai* traders and markets in the plains. Should this proves successful then transportation of hill produces to the plains could be much easier and convenient than before.[181] [*Free translation from original Mizo language*]

Huatkunga also viewed that since the location had an advantage of health centre situated nearby, he even acclaimed that place as *Damlai Pialral* (Living Paradise) for the Lushai people.[182] He even attempted to educate the people: 'Since almost all people need rice, rice producers are the most prosperous people living on earth; and large scale production of rice is possible only by the practice of *Leilet*'.[183] After the successful introduction of *Leilet* in the three locations, Champhai, North Vanlaiphai, Leilet was also carried out in valleys of Thenzawl and Tuishenhar.[184]

The government's endeavour to achieve surplus rice and related food grains production continued on. In the1930s, exotic varieties of rice or paddy, millet, wheat, barley with other agro-based crops were experimented in the government owned Dhubinallah garden near Aizawl. Interestingly, although the famous Manipuri variety was

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[180] A famine locally known as *Mautam* or *Tam* occurred at the end of 1911 in the Lushai Hills. See Sajal Nag (2008), Pied Pipers in North-East India, 136.
[181] Mizo leh Vai Chanchin Bu (hereafter MVCB), Aizawl Theological College (hereafter ATC), Aizawl, Bu 3na, March 1923, 175-179.
[182] MCVB, ATC, Aizawl, Bu 6na, June 1923, 200-211.
[183] Mizo leh Vai Chanchin Bu (MVCB hereafter), ATC, Aizawl, 3na Mar 1923, 175-179.
[184] Tuisenhnar was a small Leilet settlement which had two Head-men Joybahadur and Nipuia when Leilet was started in 1925. Joybahadur held till he died in 1932. Then his land went to Tawnga Sailo chief of Khawzawl whereas Nipui still remained in charge and runs his small holding with credit. See Mc.Call (1980), *The Lushai Hills District Cover*, 113.

absent, the cultivators were able to get good yields in the year 1931-32. The government, through the demonstrator, introduced nine fresh varieties of paddy in the terraced field of Dhubinalla garden. Each paddy variety was allotted a plot, and one maund of all varieties sown in every plot. The size of the paddy plot was estimated to be 0.71 acres in all. The overall yield of the crop was 20 maunds and 15 seers (kg.) only. However, compared with other grain crops like millet, wheat, barley, these paddy varieties yielded satisfactorily for the year 1932. It is apparent that the effort to promote other crops like potato (of different varieties), orange, tea, coffee, and others did not register much success.[185]

In the same year (1932), the following terrace cultivations were carried out at various places in Lushai Hills: (a) one at Chaltlang by a Napali who cultivated 1.13 acres yielding 22maunds of Nepali paddy (variety); (b) three Lushais households cultivated at Dhubinallah garden, (c) eleven households did terrace fields at Saiphai in an area of 8.5 acres and harvested above 240 maunds altogether; (c) at Hmaiponga and Paireng, eleven houses in an area of 10 acres, sown Manipuri rice and reaped 45 maunds per acre; and (d) at Sailamzawl, twenty one households began to practise terraced rice. However, the cultivators at Sailamzawl complained about frequent drying up of water (run-off) which resulted in poor crops during the year.[186]

As a matter of fact, the hoe-culture (Jhum) fell short of expectation for rice supply, let alone trading and marketing, for the cultivators, civilians and armed forces settled across the hill district. Since the last decade of the nineteenth century and soon after the full conquest of the Lushai Hills, the British government considered improving rice productivity as an immediate needs that merited attention, apart from road construction. British army officers had expressed the need to explore local potentials for rice supplies instead of exporting from outsides like Chittagong or Cachar. Major Shakespear, for instance, lamented about the crop failure due to erratic rainfall on which the hoe-based jhum totally depended upon, and further took steps to remove this inefficiency by introducing a more advanced wet-rice cultivation among the erstwhile jhum cultivators. A.W. Davis was concerned about the shortage of rice so much so that he even did not

[185] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-429, CB-33. Report of Agricultural Work in Aijal Subdivision for the year ending 31st March 1932. Crops experiment at Dhubinalla Garden, Aizawl Subdivision for the year 1931-1932.
[186]MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-429, CB-33: Report of Agricultural Work in Aijal Subdivision for the year ending 31st March 1932.

collect annual tribute in the form of rice. Naturally, jhum or hoe based culture depends on the bounty of monsoonal rain whereas plough and bullock-based wet-rice needs only a specific and ideal amount of rainfall throughout the season. Moreover, in wet-rice cultivation the required water supply can be arranged by means of irrigation and man-made water harvest system. So *Leilet* or wet-rice, once constructed, decreased the dependence on the monsoon gods. Besides, new land laws such as permanent land holding by the cultivators themselves is a huge leap in the land holding system of the Lushais. So, *Leilet* or wet-rice is one of the most important factors that led to transition of rice cultivation from mere subsistence to surplus and then to market orientation.

Rice Production and Marketization

Increase in rice productivity and commercialisation (marketisation) is the ultimate aim of wet-rice or *Leilet* movement initiated under the state in the Lushai Hills. As already stated, this stage was made possible with introduction of *Leilet*, improvement on agricultural technology, and fall of transport cost by the improved road communication. Rice used to be imported from outside the Lushai Hills mainly from Silchar or Chittagong. The District also imported rice from Rangoon (Burma) significantly.[187] *Leilet* movement visibly boosted the productivity and production of rice and led rice to the rice markets as shown in the account of goods items in the official records (Table 3.3). Lushai Rice, which actually was Manipuri variety, cultivated in wet-rice, for instance, began to feel its presence among other commodities in the *bazaars*. In the years 1906-07, cultivators got a bumper harvest and they began to sell their rice produce to the markets, although for a limited period of time. The production at Champhai and North Vanlaiphai was above average in the same year. Due to the use of plough bullocks, the cultivation steadily progressed in the following years. In fact dry or Country Rice was mainly produced for subsistence though some surplus was available at the markets. The Lushais gradually conceived the idea of expanding *Leilet* to increase rice production though they were quite suspicious of any innovation to begin at first. Shortly, they came to terms with new innovation and thus they began experimenting it out once it was instructed to them. Thus, the surplus rice reached the marketplaces for sale since 1906-07.[188]

[187] The articles sold in Aijal bazar includes besides others the Rangoon rice too in 1921-22 report. See MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-329, Cabin No.26.
[188] MSA, Aizawl, General Department: Administration Report of Lungleh Subdivision for the year 1906-1907.

Table 3.3: Difference in the prices of rice and other commodities in markets, 1906-07 to 1908-09

S.No	Name of articles.	1906-07		1907-08		1908-09	
		Contract Rate (per maund)	Bazaar Rate (per maund)	Contract Rate (per maund)	Bazaar Rate (per maund)	Contract Rate (per maund)	Bazaar Rate (per maund)
		Rs. annas	Rs. Annas	Rs. annas	Rs. annas	Rs. annas	Rs. annas
1	Balam rice	8.14	10.0	8.12	10.0	8.0	9.0
2	*Country rice*	6.15	7.8	7.5	7.10	7.0	7.8
3	*Lushai rice*	5.0	5.8	4.8	4.18	0.0	4.0
4	Atta	8.0	8.0	8.14	10.0	8.14	10.0
5	Ghee	47.8	55.0	50.8	60.0	50. 0	55.0
6	Salt	4. 14	6.80	6.00	5.00	4.12	5.00
7	Mustard oil	23.10	26.00	24.80	30.00	25.80	30.00
8	Dall	7.10	8.00	8.70	8.14	8.60	9.00
9	Sugar	7.10	20.00	8.70	20.00	8.60	20.00
10	Kerosene oil	7.10	12.00	8.70	10.00	8.60	10.00

Source: Annual Administration Report of the Lushai Hills for the Year 1908-09. Note: Lushai rice refers to wet-rice whereas Country rice is mainly jhum rice.

Official report suggests that since Leilet was widely carried out with certain methods of irrigation and sufficient rainfall for two years (1908-09) the success of rice production in the Champhai and North Vanlaiphai valleys was highly spectacular. The rice crops throughout the Lushai Hills district were 'excellent and averaged 16 annas'.[189] By the year 1908, the three miles long irrigation channel in Champhai valley which was traced by Col. Loch was reported as completed.[190] This success had encouraged other cultivators to take up Leilet which further enlarged rice production generally. The successful yields in the both the valleys is expressed as:

> Two years of bumper crops from the wet-rice cultivation in the Champhai and North Vanlaiphai valleys have resulted in a large number of Lushai settlers taking up lands especially at the former place. Col. Loch estimated that the total crop at Champhai must have been closed to 10000 maunds. The Manipuri rice did especially well…[191]

[189]MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-160, CB-13: Administration Report of the Lushai Hills for the Year 1908-1909.
[190]MSA, Aizawl, Political Department, Pol-48, CB-5: No. 13G, From Major J. Shakespear, Superintendent, Lushai Hills, to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam, dated Aijal, the 6th April 1904. Cited in Lalzuimawia (2016), 197
[191] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-160, CB-13: Administration Report of the Lushai Hills for the Year 1908-1909.

In January 1909 G.H. Loch visited North Vanlaiphai as he took charge of the Lushai Hills as an officiating Superintendent. He observed that the wet rice cultivation was doing well though the scale was smaller than that of Champhai. At North Vanlaiphai too Manipuri rice yielded a good result as in the case of Champhai.[192] As the wet-rice cultivation was quite successful, it was expected that this supply sufficiently met the demand of the British garrisons at Champhai and Vanlaiphai, apart from the local requirements. The farmers as well as the people in the areas no longer needed to import *Balam* rice from Calcutta as the locally produced Manipuri rice (rechristened as Lushai Rice) was practically good enough to replace it. Similarly, though Lushai Hills used to import rice from Rangoon (Burma) it had stopped since 1922 due to the success of the locally produced 'Lushai Rice' (Table 3.4).[193] Earlier, a British Officer in Aizawl even envisioned the possibility of exporting rice from Champhai to Chin Hills in the hope that *Leilet* in Champhai would be a huge success one day. So he even proposed a road connection between Aizawl and Tiddim (Chin Hills) through Champhai. However, as stated, this proposal was not approved by the Assam and Burma government.[194]

The surplus in rice production let the Lushai Hills create an import-substitution to significant extent. Lushai traders did not solely depend on rice supply from outside anymore. In 1904 the Aizawl-Lunglei bridle road construction was completed and again in 1909 about 42 miles of the surface had been well dressed.[195] By 1908-09, the construction of Sairang-Aijal cart road and the Lunglei-Demagiri bridle road — the two important arteries of Lushai Hills District — were completed by the Public Work Department. Aizawl-Falam via Champhai road was widened from 3 to 6 feet pliable for bullock carts. Completion of all these roads allowed the reduction of carriage charges in goods for traders as well as to the British militaries over the old river passes to reach the bazaar locations and garrisons respectively.[196] Local sellers could conveniently supply rice

[192] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-160, CB-13: Tour diary of Lt. Col. G. H. Loch, Offg. Superintendent, Lushai Hills for the month of January 1909. Cited in Lalzuimawia (2016), *John Shakespear in the Lushai Hills*, 203.
[193] Till 1921-22 there was a record of Rangoon Rice in the bazars and Contract shops in Aijal. But after 1922 there was no more mention of it. See MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-329, Cabin No.26.
[194] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-57, CB-5: From H.N. Tuck, Political Officer, Chin Hills, to the Chief Secretary to the Government of Burma, No.10, dated the 9th October 1897.
[195] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-103, CB-8: Administration Report of Lungleh Sub-Division for the year 1903-04, by Supervisor, P.W.D Incharge, Lungleh, Dated the 8th April 1904.
[196] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-160, CB-13: Administration Report of the Lushai Hills for the Year 1908-1909.

stocks from *Leilet* villages to marketplaces of Aizawl and Lunglei after they sold out to nearby military posts. They also acted as the middlemen between the farmers and retailers. They supplied rice seeds to the cultivators in sowing period. Suaka was a Lushai Circle Chaprasi (interpreter) who kept records on rice seeds supplied to the cultivators as well as rice produce to the government's contract shops in the markets. In September 1910 he bought rice from 26 Champhai cultivators about 88/30/ maunds of Manipuri rice at the rate of Rs. 4/8/- (per maund) and sent them by bullock wagons to the Superintendent at Aizawl for sale in the contract shops. The estimated total cost of the rice was Rs. 399/6/- at market rate.[197]

Remarkably, the country rice, attributed mainly to jhum, was found among the lists of rice item for about two decades—1890-1910. After that, wet-rice or technically Lushai Rice flocked the marketplaces. A report of 1910-1911 maintained that traders in Lunglei bazaar alone sold over 234 maunds of rice and received Rs. 940 out of its sales.[198] Official account on food grains and other essential commodities in the Aizawl bazaar literally ceased to mention about the Country Rice since 1922 (Table 3.4). Thus, such account of food stuffs indicates that the Lushai had improved tremendously in permanent cultivation in the form of wet-rice—lowland paddy and terrace, and rice production had transitioned from being subsistent to commercial agro-crops. Lushai Rice became an important item of trade in the local markets since the first decade of the 20th century. So, this reflects a small but remarkable shift in the internal structure of rice trade within the local economy.

[197] MSA, Aizawl, Agriculture Department, Agr-15, CB-1: Distribution List of Manipuri Dhan from Champhai to Aijal. Also see MVCB Vol-VI, June 1905, p.15.
[198] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-183, CB-15: Annual Administration Report, Lungleh Sub-Division, 1910-1911.

Table 3.4: Difference in the prices of commodities in Contract and Bazaar rates in Aijal bazar and Contract rates, 1921-22 to 1923-24

S.No	Name of articles.	1921-22		1922-23		1923-24	
		Contract Rate (per maund)	Bazaar Rate(per maund)	Contract Rate (per maund)	Bazaar Rate (per maund)	Contract Rate (per maund)	Bazaar Rate (per maund)
		Rs./ annas	Rs./annas	Rs./annas	Rs./annas	Rs./annas	Rs./annas
1	Balam rice	13/11	*not sold*	*not sold*	*not sold*	*not sold*	*not sold*
2	Cachari rice 1st class	10/11	11	11.15	12.8	11.8	12.8
	Cachari rice 2nd class	9/11	10	8.15	9.8	7.3	8
3	Rangoon rice	10.11	*not sold*	*not sold*	*not sold*	*not sold*	*not sold*
4	*Lushai rice*	9.11	10	-	8	7.3	5
5	Atta	13.11	14	16	16	12.8	15
6	Ghee	99	100	87.8	100	85	100
7	Dall	13.5	14.9	13.2	15	11.2	12.2
8	Mustard Oil	27.8	39	34.6	40	30.1	35
9	Sugar	not sold	35	not sold	35	not sold	35

Source: Annual Administration Report of the Lushai Hills for the Year 1923-24.[199]

By 1912, increase in rice production from all circles the District was registered (Table 3.5). April 1912 issue of *Mizo leh Vai Chandchin Bu* reported about the quantity of rice produced in all circles of the Lushai Hills district. The editor exhorted the efforts taken by both the state and individual cultivators for relentlessly pursuing the work of *thlawhma* (cultivation). The editorial piece stated that there was tremendous increase in rice cultivation as compared to previous decades, and encouraged more people to engage in *thlawhma* because 'no human can live without agricultural produce'. It further noted that Lushai *ram* (land) then had seen increasing population as well as sizes of land brought under *Leilet* unlike their cognate Pawi *ram* (land of the Pawi tribes in parts of southern Lushai Hills). Extract from the report states (translated version); [200]

> As long as there is sufficient lands for cultivation, we should be motivated to extensively cultivate them so that we may not regret later; if not, our land will be wasted like that of the Pawi where only cucumbers and bean leaves grow. Human population keeps rising instead of declining.

In the 1929-30 rice report, Champhai (Circle V), being the area of Leilet origin, registered the highest yield amongst all regions. The Lushais used various units of measurements for buying and selling grains. They were known as *dawrawn, hrai, dan, tin*

[199] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-329, CB-26: 'Annual Report on the Administration of the Lungleh Subdivision for the Year 1923-24', 3.
[200] MVCB, ATC, Aizawl, Bu 4na, April 1912, 29.

and kawt in local terms. For instance, Re.1 could buy around 1.7 tin of rice at Aizawl and its surrounding circles whereas the same amount of Re.1 bought as much as 5.2 tin of rice at remote areas like Circle IX (Table 3.5). So the price of rice decreased from Aizawl to the peripheral remote areas, most probably the producing centres. Prices of rice was also relatively high in Champhai (semi-urban) markets and then from there decreased in the surrounding rural areas. Aizawl, being the central marketplaces, served as the destination for the *Leilet* farmers or chiefs to sell their produce.[201] From Aizawl the produces were brought down to Sairang, Lunglei and Demagiri. Lunglei, being a separate subdivision of the district, had been trying its best to obtain rice supplies from the local areas itself. The presence of shop in Lunglei bazaar was first mentioned officially in 1901. There were only two shops in 1901 belonging to Bengalis of Chittagong. The Subdivision officials attempted to introduce wet-rice by any means since 1910s. Terrace rice was viable most significantly, given the natural relief.[202] Besides, the administration also organised weekly markets to get access of agricultural produces especially rice and vegetables. Apart from making government owned garden, it also looked upon the feasibility of trade connection with the Arakan markets by proposing road connection from Lunglei to Lungdaw and extending navigation in the Koladyne River flowing down the Arakan region of Burma.[203] The making of Lunglei as rice and other commodity market, therefore, took a few decades of transition mainly enhanced by road connectivity and land reclamation. In 1911, the Lunglei bazaar was able to sell out over 234 maunds of rice and earned approximately Rs.939 from its sale.[204] In 1912, the Superintendent of the district also reported that the rate of rice dropped from previously Rs.2 a seer to Re.1 indicating a bumper harvest. The rate in Lunglei was then same as in Aizawl.[205]

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[201] MVCB, ATC, Aizawl, Bu 3na, March 1931, pp. 43-48.
[202] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-217, CB-18: Administration Report of Lungleh Sub-division for the year 1916-17.
[203] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-183, CB-15: Administration Report of Lungleh Sub-Division for the years 1910-11, pp.18-20; Also see MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-359, Cabin No.29: Eastern Bengal and Assam Province, Public Works Department; 'Providing of a 3 ft. wide bridle path Lungleh-Tuipang road to Lungdaw (at Kolodyne River)', framed by Lalchhinga, Officiating Sub-Overseer, Lungleh, dated 30/5/1926.
[204]MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-183, CB-15: Administration Report of Lungleh Sub-Division for the years 1910-11, 12.
[205] MSA, Aizawl, G-193, CB-16: From J. Heslott Esquire, I.C.S, Superintendent, Lushai Hills, to the Commissioner, Surma Valley and Hills Districts, Silchar, Dated Aijal the 30th January 1912.

Table 3.5: Rice Yield Report in Lushai Hills District, 1929 & 1931

Circle	No. of households	Population	Rice Yield (in Tin)	Average Price (Worth of Re.1 in Tin)
I (Aizawl)	13	7378	35544	1.7
II	27	2410	62257	2.4
III (a)	20	4412	29613	3.2
III (b)	9	4002	33144	3.0
IV (a)	13	7293	59446	3.5
IV (b)	12	5978	38115	4.0
Champhai Circle No. V (1931)	27	11062	80915	2.6
VI (1931)	14	7110	58772	4.2
VII (1931)	19		66123	2.0
VIII (1931)	21		73148	4.0
IX (1931)	13	5132	61210	5.25
X	14	2663	28075	4.5
XI (1931)	19	4829	49936	4.6

Source: MVCB, Bu 3na, March 1931, pp. 43-48. Note: 3 Tins = 0.5 Maund. Note: Circle I is Aizawl.

Aizawl was the main rice *bazaar* where private retailers and governmental contract sellers are found. In 1935, N.E. Parry (Superintendent of Lushai Hills) ordered to change the system of selling rice and other agricultural produces by local whole sellers. Every seller was allotted specific spot to sell the produces to avoid unnecessary rush and chaos created by frenzied buyers or retailers. The standing order reads:

> Henceforth person selling rice in the bazaar will all sell in one place, which I have pointed out to the S.I. Police. The S.I. Police will see that all sellers of rice go straight to their allotted places and sell rice there only. On bazaar days no one may sell rice to shopkeepers in their shops before 11 A.M. The S.I Police is to make all arrangements and see that this order is enforced. Breach of order will entail a fine of Rs. 40/- on each party breaching.[206]

In the same years, 1932, the Crop demonstrator of Lushai Hills gave reports on various rice cultivation in terraced farms in and around Aizawl subdivision for the year 1931-32. For instance, one Sridal Rai, a Nepali, maintained a terrace cultivation at Chartlang, near Aizawl by sowing a Nepali paddy variety. He obtained a yield of 22 maunds in an area of 1.13 acres of land. In fact, terrace fields required plenty amount of rainfall for crops growth. At Saiphai hamlet, eleven households lived to continue terrace cultivation in an area of 8.44 acres which yielded about 240 muands of paddy in the same

[206] MVCB ATC, Aizawl, Bu 3na March 1935: Standing Order No. 102 Date 4-1-27

year which averaged about 30 maunds per acre. This is considered a fair outturn. The terrace cultivation at Paireng hamlet had eleven households cultivating the crop in an area of 10 acres with a resultant yield of 45 maunds per acre of paddy. These cultivators used local variety of rice known as Saijamur, which gave a fairly good result. In the early 1920s some Lushai left a remote place in Champhai to settle at Palat in the southern tip of Lushai Hills where they obtained land for Leilet. They expressed about their success as:

> We used to live in Champhai. Now that we have reached here in Palat valley, we don't look back again. From now on, as we will improve our ways of cultivation, our lives in this village will be more prosperous.[207]

The overall efforts taken by the government and the people of Lushai Hills to enhance the yields of rice in the district is remarkable. The Lushais, in their own capacity were able to produce surplus rice for sale in the local bazaars and various military posts, and also to valley bazaars through road and river transports. In 1935The Superintendent of the District (A.G. McCall) price of clean rice (unhusked rice) was fixed at Rs. 4 a maund at village sites for supplying the official survey team in the District.[208]

Categorisation of Lushai Rice Markets

Rice moved in different states of markets (Dutta 2012). In the history of Lushai Hills, about five consumption centres or rice markets could be identified: (a) local or *Leilet* villages, (b) military posts, (c) annual exhibitions, (d) retail shops or markets, and (e) outside. First, the rice traders directly went to the wet-rice producing villages and bought stocks of rice from the local cultivators or the prosperous chiefs or headmen of the *Leilet* villages.[209] The medium of measurement varied from one village to another. While some villages used *dawrawn* (medium size sack), others used *hrai* (larger sack) to measure rice sale. Mustard oil tin was the most commonly used medium as the unit of measurement of grains.[210] There was a complete report on rice produce and its inter-village variation in rate for the years 1929-31 (Table 3.5). Second, the military posts were another important rice consumption

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[207] MVCB, ATC, Aizawl, 10na Oct 1925**,** 228-230.
[208] MSA, Aizawl, General Department: File No, 2808G, From A.G. McCall, Superintendent, Lushai Hills, to the Director, Eastern Circle, Survey of India, Shillong, Dated Aijal, 9th January 1934.
[209] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-193, CB-16: From Office of the Superintendent, Lushai Hills, to Deputy Commissioner, Cachar, Dated 20th September 1911.
[210] Tools of the unit of measurement were different from one village to another. In a 'Rice Report' made by Circle officers, measurement for rice quantities was done in *Hrai*, *Tin*, *Dawrawn* (all Mizo/Lushai terms). See MVCB, ATC, Aizawl, 3na, March 1927: Buh Reportna-te.pp.51-60; And MVCB, Bu 3na, March 1931: Buh Reportna-te. 43-48.

centres or markets situated outside the *Leilet* villages. Before cultivators were able to produce surplus rice, all military garrisons across the Lushai Hills solely depended on import from outside - Cachar, Sylhet and Chittagong. The introduction of *Leilet* tremendously changed the source of rice supplies for the militaries stationed in Lushai Hills. For instance, in the year 1907, the military police at Lenglei bought rice from the local producers at Rs. 5/- per maund, which was said to be quite a low rate. The Lunglei report further maintained that there was exceptionally surplus rice in that year that supply even exceeded demand.[211]

Third, the annual exhibition (trade fair) or *Thil Entir Siakna* (in Lushai dialect) at Lammual in Aizawl where competitions were held on all kinds of agricultural products, domesticated animals, poultries, arts and crafts, clothes, and others displayed at an open space. The finest products from all categories were identified and rewarded by the organiser, the Superintendent of Lushai Hills. This competition event held every year was regarded as an important outlet for products made or cultivated locally by every artists, farmers, and professionals. At the end of the event the participants or traders would sell their products at the spot itself or at the shops of Aizawl bazaars. Rice was one sections of agricultural produces shown in this exhibition. Remarkably, at the event held on the 12th August 1927 at Aizawl, around 171 rice and 69 potato cultivators participated with their produces besides 42 pigs, 36 cows, 25 bulls, 143 poultries, 22 goats, 22 vasectomized goats, 10 doves from bird and animal rearing sections.[212]

Besides, some local farmers, especially those settled in proximity to rivers, sold their rice produce outside Lushai Hills albeit in small scale. For them river still remained a convenient way to reach the plains markets. Since 1923, for instance, the villagers of Serlui and Bailum of around 50 households in a northern corner of the district started *Leilet*. They found ready markets for their surplus produce at Kolasib as their villages were connected with Kolasib by Dhaleswari River. They preferred the river way transport rice stocks rather than walking the long mountain trails. Besides, they had no bullocks to transport rice in bulk.[213] The cultivators of Kolasib (Rengte) also enjoyed smooth riverine connection with the *Vai dawrs* (Foreign bazaars) in Dwarband and Dolai (Cachar) by

[211] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-130, CB-10: Notes for Administration Report, Lengleh Sub-Division, 1906-07. P.31.
[212] MVCB, ATC, Aizawl, Bu 5na, August 1927: Thil Entir Siak Na (Exhibition Market), 172-173.
[213] MVCB, ATC, Aizawl, Bu 3na Mar 1923, 175-179.

boats.[214] Since the Lushais at Bairabi (located at the northern border near Cachar) began wet-rice cultivation, they followed two economic lifelines—river way and road way—for reaching the Cachar marketplaces. From Bairabi, they were able to reach lowland village called Kuki Cherra in a day journey where they sold off or buy agricultural and other articles. From Sairang, many farmers, including those from Bairabi, went down to various transits before they finally reach the plain markets by boat through Dhaleswari River. They sold their rice and other produces and bought necessities as their village (Bairabi) was near to 'foreign' bazaars.[215]

The rice traders directly bought stocks of rice from producing villages and supplied the retail shopkeepers at Aijal, Lungleh, Demagiri, Sairang and other centres too. The retail shops in the bazaars of various semi-urban centres in the Lushai Hills were the important destinations of rice and other agricultural produce to both buyers and sellers. Till 1925 an official report maintained that the locations and number of shops selling food grains and other articles were: Aizawl 87 shops, Sairang 20 shops, Lunglei 13 shops, Demagiri 4 shops, Champhai one shop, Kolasib one shop, Muifang one shop, Tipaimukh one shop and Sonai one shop (Figure 2.2). It further noted that Lushais were taking keen interest in rice cultivation and its trade.[216] The government exempted tax to those shops opened at remote towns and villages.[217] This apparently manifests that local markets in the Lushai Hills had already been integrated in the first half of the twentieth century. The transformation in local rice markets had been brought about by the introduction Leilet movement with advanced road connections across the Lushai Hills in the colonial period.

Role of Loan in *Leilet* Movement

The Leilet movement was significantly strengthened by the introduction of loan system. The agricultural credit or loan system in Lushai Hills was introduced by the district government in accordance with the terms of the Agricultural Loans Act XII of 1884 and

[214] MCVB, ATC, Aizawl, Bu 6na June 1923, 200-211.
[215] MVCB, ATC, Aizawl, Bu 8na August 1932: *Leilet* Thu. This explains that though roads have replaced largely the riverine transportation, the latter still claimed its importance in border areas of Lushai Hills and Cachar. In fact, no exclusive presence or relevance of roadway alone at the expense of riverine transport was claimed by this research. In fact the importance of river way at certain corners of the hills nearby plains markets is still existent.
[216] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-327, CB-26: Annual Report on the Administration of the Lushai Hills for the year 1924-1925, 21.
[217] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-133, CB-10: From the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam, to the Superintendent, Lushai Hills, dated Shillong, the 3rd October, 1904.

subject to sanction and provision of funds by the Government of India. Agriculture loans or advances played an important role in the development of *Leilet* and other crops cultivation in the Lushai Hills. In the history Lushai Hills, agricultural loan system was first implemented in the South Lushai Hills by Bengal administration before the full annexation of the Lushai Hills. In early 1870s, T. H. Lewin (Superintendent of Chittagong) took permission from the Government of Bengal to advance a sum of 4000 Pound to the hill farmers in Demagiri to enable them purchase ploughs and cattle for *Leilet*. Lewin held that the loans given would make the cultivators shift from the 'old jum culture' to settled *Leilet* which would further 'change the face of the country and permanently ameliorate the condition of the people'.[218]

In the unified Lushai Hills district of Assam, loans for agricultural activities began due to frequent agricultural failures and the subsistent nature of jhum rice. Lushai farmers fell short of capital to begin *Leilet* in their fields. So the government assisted the cultivators by advancing the required seeds, ploughs and bullocks in loan to start the work. Such loans were granted to needy cultivators in the name and security of the village chiefs or headmen of the concerned cultivators, not in the names of individual cultivators. The government office maintained individual account to keep records of the quantities of rice taken by the cultivators under the witness of the chiefs or headmen with the sums due as interest.[219] The loans or advances taken could be repaid in cash or kind (paddy).

When the farmers were in need of loans either for purchasing seedlings or other food articles, they had two choices: either they directly apply to the concerned officers at Aizawl or approach the regional officers for the required loan if their villages were far and isolated. The Circle Staff made a list of those villages which had enough surplus rice to spare for loans to the nearest distressed villages. The government bought rice from those villages and gave it to the farmers only after the concerned chiefs the *Leilet* villages singed on a paper on the farmers' behalf. Those supplying chiefs were repaid of their credited loans by the government at Aizawl on the condition that they needed to show the signed chits for the rice they loaned out.[220]

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[218] Lewin (1912), *A Fly On The Wheel Or How I Helped To Govern India*, 294.
[219] McCall (1980), *The Lushai Hills District Cover*, 185-186 & 189-190.
[220] McCall (1980), 185-186 & 189-190.

When *Leilet* was introduced in the Lushai Hills, the government replaced the old *balam* rice of Calcutta by Manipuri rice and gave it to farmers of Champhai and Vanlaiphai fields as loan. Shakespeare led the farmers to test rice of Naga Hills, Sylhet and Silchar too. However, Manipuri rice was the most successful one in the history of Lushai Leilet cultivation. The Table 5 shows the government granted loan on Manipuri *dhan* (rice seed) to *Leilet* cultivators for sowing in the year 1910.[221]

Table 3.6: List of persons supplied Manipuri Rice as loan in Champhai *Leilet,* 1910

Sl. No	Name of Headmen	Quantity	Rate (Rs.)	Cost
1	Sanga	20/-/-	2/-	40
2	Thangthiauva	11/20/-	2/-	23
3	Butpawla	11/-/-	2/-	22
4	Laitea	19/-/-	2/-	38
5	Singbir Jemadar	13/20/-	2/-	27
6	Hlawnchina	5/-/-	2/-	10
7	Vanhnuaikhuma	4/-/-	2/-	8
Total		84/-/-		168/-

Source: MSA, Aizawl, Agriculture Department, Ag-15, CB-1

The report also suggests that the cultivators got Manipuri rice seeds as a loan from the government rice contractors (sellers) at Aizawl. When the loan was recovered the amount was to be credited to Agricultural advances against each of them. In the same year (1910) the total loan taken by Vira of North Vanlaiphai (Rs.230), Singbir Bahadur (Rs. 60), Bharman Rai (Rs.100), Butpawla (Rs.500), Sanga and others (Rs.300), Laitea (Rs.280), Jog Bahadur (Rs.60) and Laitea and others (Rs.80) amounted to Rs.1810.[222]

Like the 'village *Mahajans'* facilitated money lending or loans to the 'ryots'(peasants) in the first half of the twentieth century-Assam,[223] the 'well-to-do' villages (mainly the chiefs) situated nearby gave loans to the isolated villages in distress or to the wet-rice cultivators.[224] In Assam, the village *Mahajans* were the professional village moneylenders but not necessarily the buyers of the produce. Marwari businessmen were essentially the buyers of the produce which also gave out loans to the peasants.

[221] MSA, Aizawl, Agriculture Department, Ag-15, CB-1: List of persons supplied Manipuri Dhan, Dated the 28th August 1910, Aizawl.
[222] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, Ag- 15, CB-1: Account of Advances made out of Agricultural Money (Undated).
[223] Saikia (2010), The Moneylenders and Indebtedness: Understanding the Peasant Economy of Colonial Assam, 1900–1950, 64–65.
[224] McCall (1980), *The Lushai District Cover*, 186.

Farmers in Assam derived their loans from three sources: (a) the village Mahajans, (b) buyers of the produce (Marwaris) and (c) other creditors comprised of occasional Assamese.[225] But such system or process was not found in the Lushai Hills. The idea of agro-credit system or loan (in terms of rice or money) to cultivators was exclusively a new state-construct in the history of agriculture in Lushai Hills. It is aimed at transforming the agrarian culture by bringing in exotic species of crop varieties as well as new method and techniques to introduce the produces into the global grain/rice markets for sale. However, like the government had fixed the interest rate of money lending to the farmers in Assam,[226] the loan givers in the Lushai villages also fixed a maximum amount and rate of interest as prepared by the Superintendent of Lushai Hills.[227]

Till the year 1916, the total amount of agricultural loans granted to cultivators by the government in the Lushai Hills was Rs. 82981/5, out of which the principal amount of Rs. 17187/6/4 was realized. There remained around Rs. 52723/0/5 balance as the principal outstanding. Loans were collected in instalment basis and could be repaid in instalment too.[228] Official records state that the government tremendously increased the amount of loans given to cultivators till the year June 1922. Under the Agriculturists Loans Act, the Superintendent of Lushai Hills and the Commissioner of Surma Valley and Hills Division remitted loans to the Assam government amounting to Rs. 305741 during the year 1921-22 of which Rs. 25315 represented the principal and Rs. 5259 interest.[229]

The manner and extent to which Lushai Hills' cultivators were imparted a practical education on cropping by the crop instructors, and the systematic loan system implemented among them clearly reflected the government's policy to put the Hills in the road to specialisation and commercialisation of agriculture in par with other districts of Assam, Bengal or elsewhere. But the Lushais were not in a position to carry out on their own. Since there was extreme difficulty in pooling the needed resources, the state had to significantly intervene in the affairs by providing them with varieties of rice seeds, bullocks, ploughs and even experts (demonstrators). Without the state capital and finance this credit system

[225] Arupjyoti Saikia (2010), 67.
[226] Arupjyoti Saikia (2010), 64.
[227] McCall (1980), 186.
[228] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-237, CB-19: Notes for the Administration Report of Lungleh Sub-Division for the Year 1915-16.
[229] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-304, CB-24: Annual Report on the Administration of the Lushai Hills for the Year 1921-1922: 'Agricultural Loans'.

would not have been successful, and without this credit system the *Leilet* movement would not have been be as successful as it was.

Conclusion

Falling cost of road transport due to heavy state investment in expanding and improving road infrastructure from mere mule trails to bridle roads, which further extended to cart roads converged with rising agricultural productivity due to mass *Leilet* movement in the Lushai Hills. Rice trade is, in fact, a signal of improved communication and 'low transport cost' (Studer, 147). The movement, sanctioned by the colonial government, extensively discouraged hill jhum and encouraged wet-rice in the form of lowland paddy and terrace cultivations. *Leilet* movement which initially concentrated in the Champhai-North Vanlaiphai region in the eastern parts of Lushai Hills spread to almost all parts of the district within a period of two decades—1900-1920. Besides, the liberal granting of loan in the form of rice seeds and bullocks for plough (tools) revolutionised *Leilet* and placed it on a fast track of development.

As an outcome, rice production tremendously increased and surplus immediately reached the markets thereby inducing the secular price trend of the local Lushai Rice comparable with other imported rice. The price of the Lushai Rice became stable and even relatively cheaper in later stages indicating a rise in supply side whereas no other rice saw increasing trend in price movement. Interestingly, two rice types, Balam and Rangoon rice, were priced out by the rice produced from Lushai Hills after 1922. Perhaps, the inflated cost of transport in long distance was the main cause of the disappearance of the two imported rice. The Lushai Rice was apparently seen to dominate the rice markets marking a departure from the recurrence trend of Mautam (famines) across the Lushai Hills. The Leilet movement coupled with a new legal aspect, that is, permanent ownership in Leilet necessitated the rise in land value thereafter.

This phase was a very important development in the economic history of the Lushai people during the British period after the rubber trade of pre-British period. The local rice markets ranged from various military garrisons to Aizawl bazaars that further expanded in every part of the Lushai Hills such as Champhai, Kolasib and others where it was never found before. Therefore as pointed out by scholars of commercial history, in the Lushai Hills too trade and market integration had been brought about the development of road

infrastructures and fall in the cost of transportation of goods in the first half of the twentieth century of the present Mizoram. And most importantly, the Lushai people became a supplier of an important commodity (i.e. rice) in their economic history once again.

Figure 3:3: Champhai *Leilet* Area (Google Earth, dated 21/5/2019)

Figure 2:3: North Vanlaiphai *Leilet* Area (Google Earth, dated 21/5/2019)

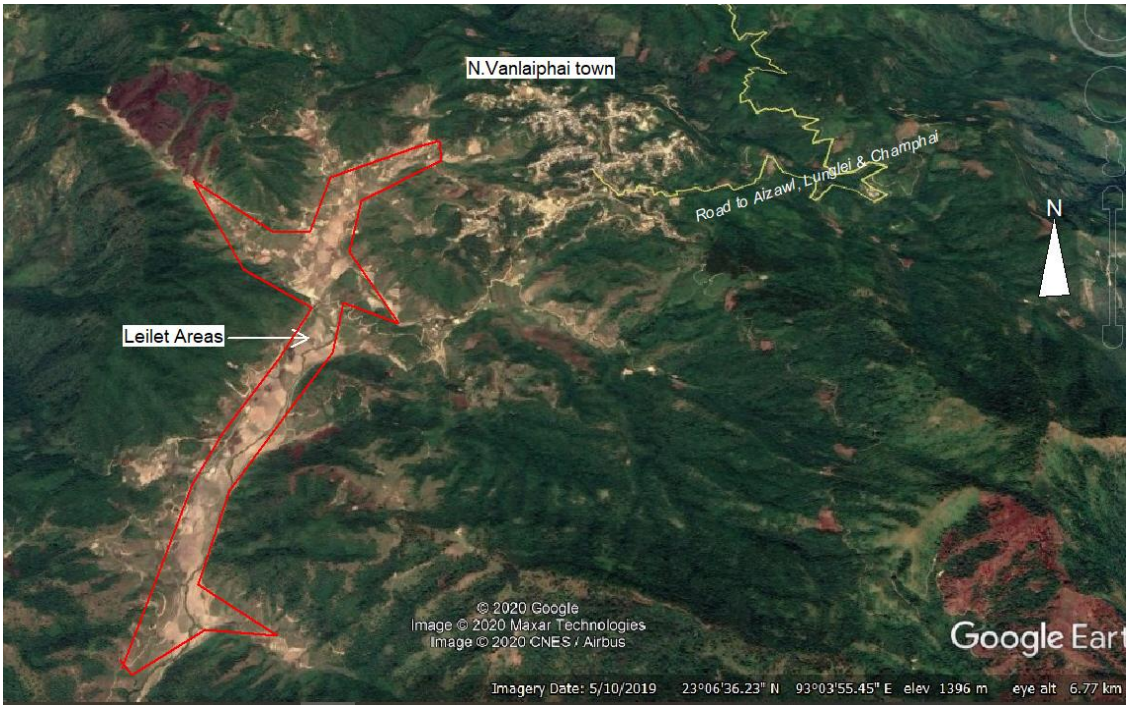
N.Vanlaiphai town
Road to Aizawl, Lunglei & Champhai
N
Leilet Areas
© 2020 Google
Image © 2020 Maxar Technologies
Image © 2020 CNES / Airbus
Google Ear
Imagery Date: 5/10/2019 23°06'36.23" N 93°03'55.45" E elev 1396 m eye alt 6.77 km

Figure 3.4: North Vanlaiphai *Leilet* Area (Google Earth, dated 21/5/2019)

Chapter 4

The Rise and Fall of Free Enterprise in Cotton Handloom, c.1910-1950

A Lushai named Lalkhuma Sailo was the second son of Zotaia-who had seven sons in all. Five of his brothers lived with his father (Zotaia) in their ancestral village. Lalkhuma, with Thangkima, one of his brothers, had been living in Chalrang village which was over-populated and could accommodate nor more than 60 households. As the village could not no longer provide land for jhum, the two brothers wished to change their settlement so as to sustain their livelihood. In May 1924, Lalkhuma appealed to the Superintendent of Lushai Hills for permission to own tracts of land at Hniphaw near Rengdil for settlement and cotton cultivation. He also stated that he would call his father and brothers along with others to make the village grow within three years.[230] It appeared to Lalkhuma and his brothers that shifting their settlement to a new place, that would allow them to plant and sell cotton, remained the only option viable to survive economically. The case of Lalkhuma Sailo is one anecdotal illustration from the Lushais nurturing the passion for cotton trade as a means of livelihood as well as earning money in the first half of the twentieth century-British-Lushai Hills.

Cotton trade in Lushai Hills predated the colonial dispensation although mass production and marketization took place long after rubber trade during the colonial period. The Lushais made (weaved) clothes and other articles from the cotton they produced from ordinary jhum lands. They sold raw cotton and locally manufactured cotton cloths as well. The locally produced raw cotton paved the way for cottage industries in the history of Lushai Hills. Official record maintains that since 1911 cotton traders in Lushai Hills sold large volume of raw cotton to valley markets to earn significant amount of money.[231]

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[230] Mizoram State Archives (MSA hereafter), Aizawl, General Department, G-295, Cabin No. 23: To the Superintendent, Lushai Hills, through the Assist. Superintendent, Aijal, Lushai Hills, from Lalkhuma Sailo of Lhalrang, dated 31st May 1924.

[231] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-183, Cabin No. 15: Annual Administration Report, Lungleh Sub-Division, 1910-1911.

Whereas the cotton industry in America was connected to the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the nature of capitalism,[232] the historiography of cotton in South Asia has revolved around the Deindustrialization Thesis initiated by the nationalist school. Interest in the cotton trade is intrinsically linked to the cotton handloom which predated the colonial era in the Indian sub-continent. In the late 19th century, Indian nationalist elites found in the history of cotton intellectual ammunition to critique British imperial economy and the policy free trade. The Indian nationalists alleged that British rule led to 'industrial devastation' (Dutt 1947:117)[233]. In academic circles, these nationalist position is called the 'Deindustrialization Thesis' (Bagchi 1976).[234] This thesis was primarily based on the claim that British colonialism destroyed the traditional handloom weavers in India by importing cheap machine-made cloth from England, especially from the early decades of the 19th century. The thesis further blamed the British for transforming India into a supplier of raw cotton and a market for British machine-made cloths (Dutt:123).

Although the deindustrialization thesis had great propaganda value for the Indian nationalists, sceptics found the claim a bit crude. Daniel Thorner (1962) [235] was one of the earliest scholars who critically scrutinized the nationalist claims. He opened the way for the revisionist historians who argue that Lancashire imports into India consisted of machine-made cloths as well as machine-made yarn. While manufactured cloths was a competitor for domestic handloom cloths, cheap import of Lancashire yarn benefitted Indian handloom weavers to expand their market (Morris, 1968).[236] This is not a simple competition between foreign cloths and domestic handloom cloths. In this triangular contest, Indian handloom weavers competed against local mill-made cloths as well as Lancashire cloths (Misra 1987).[237] Using the tools of social history P. Harnetty (1991) revisited the deindustrialization thesis through careful examination of the Indian

[232] Beckert (2014): *Empire of Cotton: A Global History*; For contrarian perspective, see Magnes, Phillip W (2018): Classical Liberalism and the New History of American Capitalism, in Michael J.Douma and Phillip W. Magnes (eds) *What is Classical Lineral History*.
[233] Dutt (1947): *India To-Day*.
[234] Bagchi (1976): Deindustrialization in Gangetic Bihar, 1809-1901.
[235] Thorner, Daniel (1962): Deindustrialization in India 1881-1931, in D. Thorner and A. Thorner (eds.), *Land and Labour in India*.
[236] Morris (1968): Towards a Reinterpretation of Nineteenth-Century Indian Economic History, *The Indian Economic & Social History Review*, 5:1, pp.1–15; Chatterjee, R (1987): Cotton Handloom Manufactures of Bengal, 1870-1921, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 22:25, 988-997.
[237] Misra (1987): The Cotton Mill Industry of Eastern India in the Late Nineteenth Century: Constraints on Foreign Investment and Expansion, 3-38.

'handloom weavers'.[238] Based on his case study of the Central Provinces of British-India, he observes that in the late 19th century 'deindustrialization did occur…but it was only partial'.[239] Harnetty was too cautious to endorse wholly the deindustrialization thesis because different categories of handloom weavers (differentiated by caste, religion and region) existed under condition of 'bust to boom and back' (Harnetty:488). Indian handloom weavers finally accepted technological innovation after decades of resistance. By the early 20th century traditional handloom weavers adopted foreign technology and shifted from throw-shuttle to fly-shuttle and from vegetable dye to synthetic dye. Harnetty further argues that this adaptation prevented 'downward spiral of deindustrialization'[240] for cotton handloom industry in British-India.

Apart from the above debate, the historiography of cotton is also concerned with the social identity of cotton producers and cotton weavers. From the Marxist perspective, the relations of production began to change in the late colonial era when caste and familial affiliations dissolves in urban textile factories. Agitations for higher wages or better working condition precipitated the formation of 'proletarian' identity (Roy, 1989).[241] Likewise, a recent study on Northeast India focuses on long-term transformation of cotton producers (during the 18th century) into sedentary peasants (during the 19th century) and finally into savage hill tribes (Misra 2018). Misra observes (2018:355) a prosperous cotton trade in Garo Hills in the 18th century, and described it as an 'essence of pre-modern sovereignties in Asia and elsewhere in the globe'.[242] The present study is not concerned neither with the old debate on the deindustrialization thesis, nor with the long-term transformation of group identity. Whereas the new history of capitalism in America emphasizes the slavery-cotton-capital nexus, the present study finds no empirical basis for the use of slave labour in cotton handloom and cotton cultivation.

This chapter shows the nature of late colonial state and the post-colonial state within the framework of the cotton textile industry. To begin with the colonial state had no interest in the brisk raw cotton trade between the Lushai Hills and the surrounding valleys.

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[238] Harnetty (1991). 'Deindustrialization' Revisited: The Handloom Weavers of the Central Provinces of India, c. 1800–1947, *Modern Asian Studies*, 25:3, pp. 455-510 doi:10.1017/S0026749X00013901
[239] Harnetty (1991). P.473.
[240] Harnetty (1991). P.507
[241] Roy (1989): Relations of Production in Handloom Weaving in the Mid-1930s, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 24:4 (Jan.), pp. PE21-PE25+PE28-PE34
[242] Misra (2018): The Sovereignty of Political Economy: The Garos in a pre-conquest and early conquest era.

Since 1936, the establishment of the Cottage Industries formalised this sector and the Lushais moved up higher in the value chain. From being exporter of raw cotton, they became exporter of more valued processed cotton products to distant markets far beyond the Lushai Hills. This case study of the Lushai Hills argues that an entrepreneurial Raj swiftly transformed into a licence Raj in the aftermath of the World War II. Despite the transfer of power in 1947 the commercial policy of independent India resembled the war-time colonial license Raj. Instead of immediately repealing war-time restrictions on the cotton trade, the post-war government became obsessed with the idea of 'rural development' through 'cooperative societies'.

The Lushai as cotton growers and traders

Like the Garo people that Misra (2018) described as adept at 'the hoe as with the plough' and cultivation of and trading in cotton outside their territories in the pre-British conquest,[243] the Lushais in the colonial period significantly took to wet-rice cultivation alongside cotton cultivation and trade outside the Lushai Hills. The manner in which Lushais used jhum as cotton field is comparable to that of Garos' exploitation of the foothills and tall hills, free from floods and dense tropical jungles, as the ideal sites for cotton cultivation.[244] Misra stated that the Garos were 'skilled producer of a very fine cotton and carrying bales of cotton down from the hills to trade them at seasonal markets at the foothills that open on to the vast plains of Brahmaputra and the Padma'. The Lushais' cotton, both in raw and finished, too reached outside the hills as far as Calcutta and Bombay too. Since the mid-18th century, Garos were well-known in the annals of British-Bengal and Assam as 'small but significant community of producers of the commodity (cotton) in the region' (Misra 2018:346). Both the economic lives of the Garo and Lushai people seamlessly weaved through old raw cotton producers, wholesalers and then to manufacturers of textiles in large markets. In fact, statistics reveals that these two districts were still topped as the largest producers of cotton in the whole colonial Assam in the 20th century.[245] However, Garos or Lushais were not the only groups of hill dwellers that trained their hands on cotton. Bhattacherjee (1975)[246] pointed out that tribes of northeast India

[243] Misra, Sanghamitra (2018), 345-387.
[244] Misra, Sanghamitra (2018), 361-362
[245] MSA, Aizawl, Agricultural Department, Ag-32, Cabin No.3: Third Forecast of the Cotton Crop of Assam 1936-39.
[246] Bhattacharjee (1975), Genesis and Patterns of British Administration in the Hill Areas of Northeastern India, 414.

such as Khampos exchanged blankets, silver, dried fruits and others for cotton, whereas Nagas exchanged loads of cotton at Golaghat, Kacharihat and borders of Cachar and Manipur for salt, rice, utensils and other items. Though the Lushais in the pre-colonial period were well-known in exchanging rubber and ivory for essential foods such as salt, rice, clothes (see Chapter 2), they also grew cotton for export in the late1870s.[247]

Lushai cultivated cotton along with rice as mixed cropping in the jhums before the advent of the British in their land. They were traditionally adept with the hoe (cotton and dry-rice cultivation) in jhums and with the plough (wet-rice) as well. Sowing of cotton seed started in the month of April/May and the harvest in November or December. Two common types of seeds were found in the Lushai Hills: Flax and Hemp. Flax was brown in colour which was mainly the Chin Hills import locally called *Tlam* by Chins. Sometimes these variety grows wild in abandoned fields too. Hemp was a white-coloured variety widely used and often called the 'white gold' by the Lushais.[248] Hemp is believed to be an imported Garo cotton introduced in to the Lushai Hills. The Garo species was stated to be better than the local one, and its cultivation outweighed that of the brown local species.[249] Although rice cultivators usually paid annual *Fathang* (rice tribute) of six kerosene-tins of rice or Rs.2 to the chiefs, he was exempted to pay any tribute on cotton cultivation. However, if a cultivator produced only cotton, then he had to pay one maund of cotton as levied by the chief annually. The government also prohibited 'outsiders' to grow cotton in the chiefs' lands in the Lushai Hills district.[250] This shows British interest in encouraging cotton cultivation and trade in the Lushai Hills, apart from other crops.

Other crops that Lushais interspersed with cotton cultivation in their jhums included vegetables, sugarcane, orange, pine apples, guava, mango, millets, lac, pulse, potatoes, wheat, tea, coffee, and others. The British government disbursed loans to farmers for the cultivation of such crops. But none of these crops was remarkably successful for marketization within and outside the Lushai Hills District of Assam. Although tea, for instance, was one of the main pillars of colonial enterprises in Assam, its plantation in

[247] *The Lushai-1878-1889*, Tribal Research Institute, Department of Arts and Culture, Aizawl, p.57.
[248] Varsangzuali (2018): *Evolution of Mizo Dress: A Historical Study*, 180.
[249] MSA, Aizawl, Ag.-327, C.B -26: Annual Report on the Administration of the Lushai hills for the year 1924-25.
[250] A.G. McCall (1980 reprint): *The Lushai Hills District Cover*, 29.

Lushai Hills did not meet any success.[251] The undertaking in processed cotton was much significant to usher in the Lushais into the world of entrepreneurship, though in small scale, in the first-half of the twentieth century. It is aptly put by a British officer in the early twentieth century in Lushai Hills as, 'The Lushai engage very little in trade, but they are capable of increasing their material prosperity'.[252]

Cotton is physically light, and does not need good road condition like rice or other heavy articles. Cotton can reach as far distance as needed or demanded. It is an export-oriented good and instils in the people the spirit of free-trade and market economy. On the other hand, the Lushais were already an outward-looking communities. As such, the market destinations are not located within Lushai Hills (Mizoram) but outside such as Cachar, Shillong, Calcutta, and other cities. The Lushais transitioned from growers and traders of raw cotton to processed cotton in the markets. The local cotton enterprise strived to climb up the value chain of cotton/textile industry as the erstwhile traditional Lushais struggled to achieve a 'sovereignty of political economy'[253] by doing cotton like their counterparts in other hills of the northeast India. In the backdrop of Lushai cotton trade, this chapter also reveals how certain British administrators, in their capacity, played roles in the struggle for transition of raw cotton trade to processed cotton trade in the Lushai Hills.

Cotton Trade

In the pre-colonial period, Lushai grew 'little cotton' since 1870s to supplement their export in natural rubber.[254] After the decline of most of the riverine bazaars—Tipaimukh, Sonai and Changsil in the north Lushai Hills in 1886-87, due mainly to the fall of rubber trade—the Lushais turned their attention to growing cotton and selling it in Cachar and other surrounding valley markets. A record of a British officer in Cachar maintained that there was an increase of trade in cotton by the Lushais who came down to the British territory through the Sonai and Dhaleswari rivers. The Lushais exchanged them with salt, tobacco, and utensils.[255] After the British annexation, a report in 1892 further stated that

[251] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-304, Cabin No. 24: 'Annual Report on the Administration of the Lushai Hills for the Year 1921-1922'. Also see Report of Agricultural Work in Aijal Subdivision for the year ending 31st March 1932.
[252] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-183, Cabin No. 15: Annual Administration Report, Lungleh Sub-Division, 1910-1911.
[253] Misra (2018), pp. 345-387.
[254] *The Lushai-1878-1889*, Tribal Research Institute, Department of Arts and Culture, Aizawl. p. 57.
[255] *The Lushai-1878-1889*, Tribal Research Institute, Department of Arts and Culture, Aizawl. p. 74.

the Lushais raised a considerable amount of cotton besides paddy and Indian-corn. In an ordinary year, they were able to sell 'large quantities' of it to the Bengali merchants at Changsil *bazaar*.[256] This trade took place at the period not long after the end of rubber trade in the *bazaars* located in the Lushai Hills.

The Lushai felt the need of earning money by other sources as their decade-old trade in rubber had winded up on the one hand and the insufficiency of income accrued solely from marketable rice from Leilet (wet-rice cultivation). As the returnees of the World War I from France had certain amount of money for capital, some of them started up businesses in their native villages whereas the more educated persons held certain positions in governmental services. There were evidences of several Lushais too working the wealthy businessmen as daily-wagers in the plains purely 'for survival'[257]. Regarding the Lushais' desperate need for works to earn money for living, the *Mizo leh Vai Chanchin Bu* aptly mentioned,

> The people in rural areas have been aware of the value and importance of money. We have been better in dressing and more interested in it now than ever before. Many of us are looking for ways to earn money and are doing certain businesses in their villages whereas others are taking articles out of their village to sell. We buy *kawl thi* [shawl] from the *Vais* [outsiders] and spent our hard-earned money on it. So it seems we settlers of the *Lusei ram* [Lushai land] might be facing shortage of money for quite some time. If you have a son going to school, your son will have to leave the school at half way of the session because you do not have the money for schooling. Our forefathers used to say that they were contented if they have sufficient food to eat as there was no competition. Now there are lots of competition in the society. So we should think about how to get money now. [258]

Therefore, the *Vai tangka* (Indian rupee/money) was the only solution they conceived for solving financial hardship. Besides, they clearly saw the feasible means of getting *Vai* money in their land by cotton trade, timber trade, grocery, governmental services, gardening or commercial crop cultivation, and skilled labour. Out of these, cotton trade caught Lushai attention as one of the most esteemed enterprises, apart from rice, to make

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[256] NAI, Delhi, Foreign Department, External-A, Proceeding August 1893: Political Report of the North Lushai Hills for 1892-93. P.3.
[257] Mizo leh Vai Chanchin Bu (MVCB hereafter), Aizawl Theological College (ATC hereafter), Aizawl, Bu 2na February 1925, p.42.
[258] MVCB, ATC, Aizawl, Bu 2na February 1925.pp.41-42.

money. In the 1920s, a cotton cultivator could earn about Rs. 500 to 800 in a year, and the cultivator could also undertake cotton cultivation with rice cultivation.[259]

Lushais normally grew cotton in April or May and harvest in autumn. Cotton, like wet-rice, got British sanction for the seeds, loans and technology. An official report in 1922 states that Lushais grew cotton in their jhum lands. Except few villages near Tipaimukh and Tipperah border, many Lushais and Chakmas near Demagiri (Tlabung) experimented cotton in fair quantities for export to Cachar and Chittagong. Cotton seeds were taken from Garo Hills known as 'Garo variety' and cultivated at suitable jhum lands. However growing of cotton was not without limitation. Rodents' attack usually became a menace to its growth as they often damaged the seeds before they sprouted out. Nevertheless, cotton experiment continued on, and later on its plantation was intensified with the help of crop instructors appointed by the government.[260] Sooner, the Garo variety reveived high preference among the cultivators. Its plantation was intensively concentrated in the western region of the Lushai Hills district near the navigable rivers, and yielded satisfactorily.[261]

Since the beginning of the 1920s several Lushai cultivators, led by the government's agricultural instructors, extensively searched for suitable lands for cotton cultivation. They also looked for road and river connection to outside markets. River banks (*Luikam* in Mizo) were preferred locations by cotton planters. Besides, cotton need ample supply of heat and light for proper growth. Therefore hill slopes facing sufficient sunlight throughout the day are mainly chosen for cotton cultivation. There was a change in livelihood due to a profitable trade opportunity placed before the Lushai people. To a common Lushai cultivator, trade in cotton offered higher income than a daily wage labour. In July 1919, a Lushai cotton cultivator named Chula from Kawrthah village, penned down a note on his experiences in cotton cultivation as,

> These days as I ponder of making profits, I consider this[cotton] as viable for a common man. It has been challenging for labourers in Mizoram to earn sufficient amount of wages. So I advise people dwelling nearby rivers to do cotton cultivation. Now I am cultivating cotton in my village named Kawrthah, and carried the cotton produce down the river and sold it to a *Vai* market named Damchawra in Rs 10/10

[259] MVCB, ATC, Aizawl, Bu 2na February 1925.pp.42-43
[260] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-304, Cabin No. 24: 'Annual Report on the Administration of the Lushai Hills for the Year 1921-1922'.
[261] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-329, Cabin No. 26: Annual Administration Report of the Lungleh Sub-Division for the Year 1923-1924 by J. Needham.

> [Rs.10, 25paise and one *dere*] per maund. To the markets south of Damchawra, the cost of raw cotton is Rs.20 per maund. Because we are not aware of these lucrative prices in the valleys, we made a mistake of selling in a disproportionate price. Also, if we want to sell it at the cotton field itself, buyers are ready to offer us Rs.8 per maund. [262] [*Translated from original Mizo version*]

Chula further narrated that his cotton field was well connected by a stream to outside markets. *Vai* (foreign or outside) *bazaar* was not far from his village. Every year the *Vai* buyers came up to Chula's place by boats to purchase his raw cotton. As Chula was able to buy household's essential articles, especially salts, from his cotton customers, he commuted less frequently to town. In 1919, Chula brought down cotton to the valley markets where some traders bought more than Rs.200 worth from him. According to Chula, cotton trade was the best undertakings that enabled a person to easily return agricultural loans he or she took from the government. Cotton proved that cultivation was not meant selectively for certain individuals alone, even a singled mother or widow could cultivate and harvest normally of 30 *hrai* to 60 *dawrawn* of cotton annually.[263] The Lushais were quite confident that except rice cultivation, cotton was the best substitute of *tai*, *ba* or *leipui* cultivations, and that rice and cotton are two most profitable crops in Lushai Hills. The cultivators usually carried down their cotton to Karimganj (Cachar), and sold it by Rs.40 per maund. Chura noted that as the price of cloth had increased after the War (World War I), so also raw cotton. The *Bawrsap* (District Superintendent) also visited remote villages and instructed the chiefs the technique of cotton plantation.[264]

The official forecast of the cotton crop in the province of British-Assam in 1921-22 and 1936-39 gave satisfactory information of cotton forecast in the Lushai Hills district. The district stood as the second position, next only to Garo Hills, in cotton yields and areas of cultivation of all the districts of Assam. The Lushai Hills was estimated to produce over 1500 bales within 6000 acres of total sown area in 1921-22. The estimated quantities of production in the succeeding 1936-39 reached 2500 bales out of total 10,000 acres of land under cultivation. Interestingly, Lushai Hills once exceeded the Garo Hills district in the

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[262] MVCB, ATC, Aizawl, Bu 7na, July 1919, pp. 97-98. Kawrthah village lies in Mamit district of present north-western part of Mizoram State. Damchawra (now Damchara) was a port village within Tipperah (Tripura) bordering Mizoram

[263] Local unit of measurements. One *dawrawn* equals roughly 5 tins while one *hrai* was equivalent to two dawrawns. They were the local standard of measurement for commodities.

[264] MVCB, ATC, Aizawl, Bu 7na, July 1919, pp. 97-98.

years prior to 1939 by producing over 13,200 bales within the same 10,000 acres of land area. In 1939, the net sown area of cotton cultivation decreased to 10,000 acres from 18,000 acres of the preceding years (Table). J. McSwiney (Director of Land Records and Agriculture) explained that the decrease in cotton area in Lushai Hills in 1936-39 was due partly to the revised area furnished by the Superintendent of Lushai Hills District and partly to the fall in price of cotton. Besides, the weather was not favourable in those years for the crops. Heavy rainfall and high wind were experienced in October which badly affected the crop almost everywhere in Assam. Most of the cotton fields were also spoilt by insects causing many fields to be abandoned. All these accounts suggest that Lushai Hills was the only deserving competitor of Garo Hills in cotton cultivation, production and sale unlike other districts of Assam such as Sylhet, Nowgong, Cachar, Naga Hills, which fell below Lushai Hills in area and quantity of yield.[265] Therefore, the cotton production in the Lushai Hills merited much attention from the merchants as well as the government of British-Assam.

Table 4.1: Forecast of Cotton Crop of Lushai Hills and Garo Hills Districts of Assam (1921-22 & 1936-39)

Year 1921-22:						
Districts	Area in Acres		Yields in bales (of 400 lbs. each)			
	Current years	Previous years	Estimated Current years	Estimated Previous years	Average Yields (preceding 5 yrs)	Average yield (preceding 10 yrs)
Lushai Hills	6000	6000	1500	1500	2100	2100
Garo Hills	19000	19000	7500	7500	7000	7100
Year 1936-39:						
Lushai Hills	10000	18000	2500	13200	3000	2300
Garo Hills	19000	19200	8200	7600	8200	8100

Source: Director of Land Records and Agriculture, Assam, 9th December 1921

Shortly, as the Lushais were able to capitalise on cotton production, they also became the suppliers not only in the local *bazaars* but also in the lowland markets of other districts of Assam. The net sown area, yield and sale of cotton expanded tremendously, as explained by the Superintendent of Lushai Hills in 1925:

[265] MSA, Aizawl, Agriculture Department, Agr-32, Cabin No. 3: From J. McSwiney, Director of Land Records and Agriculture, Assam, Camp Badarpur, the 9th December 1921

> Lushais are now growing cotton extensively and making a good trade. Many Lushais took permit for bamboos for rafts to take down cotton to plains. Aijal merchants bought about 1000 maunds of cotton from Lushais for export…The Lushais have found that they get a ready sale for it and I think that the area under cultivation will increase rapidly.[266]

S. N. Biswas, Agriculture Instructor reported that, in August 1940, the Lushai Hills district was able to export over 6267 bales of cotton.[267] By 1924, the export items of Lushai traders included largely of cotton, bee-wax, chillies and other forest products. Inspite of this, the Lushais continued to import cotton clothes and woollen yarns, brass and utensils, iron pans, soaps, clothes, and other essential stuffs. This means that they still depended on manufactured goods from outside the district.[268] It is remarkable that since 1940, the administration in Lushai Hills decided to levy four annas out of one maund of cotton being exported outside Lushai Hills which indicates the absence of tariff in cotton trade earlier in the district.[269]

Trade in Processed Cotton

The Lushais, slowly, began producing cloths out of the cotton they harvested. The British took interest in cotton handloom since early 1910s. The art of handloom and weaving was mentioned in an official report of 1916 when the administration in Lushai Hills sponsored two weaving apprentices—one in Aizawl and the other in Durtlang village. These two apprentices were teaching other trainees the use of 'new looms' and making marketable cloths. The report further stated that though locally produced cloths from the looms were sold cheaper in the *bazaar*, they were more durable than imported cloths. The main challenge faced by the weaving apprentices was a hike in price of yarn due to the War

[266] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-327, Cabin Box 26: Annual Report on the Administration of the Lushai Hills for the year 1924-1925'.
[267] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, Ag.-49, Cabin Box 4: From S.N. Biswas, Agricultural Instructor (A.I) to Superintendent, Lushai Hills, Dated 27th August 1940.
[268] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-329, Cabin Box 26: Annual Administration Report of the Lungleh Sub-Division for the Year 1923-1924 by J. Needham.
[269] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, Ag.-49, Cabin Box 4: From S.N. Biswas, Agricultural Instructor (A.I) to Superintendent, Lushai Hills, Dated 27th August 1940.

(World War I). The Superintendent of Lushai Hills also planned to purchase a sewing machine in the following years for the loom apprentices.[270]

Earlier, buyers from outside came to buy raw cotton to Lushai villages. But then later, the Lushais were able to process cotton into finished goods. In fact, they learned how to make cotton rugs, shawls, bags, and others items since the past generations. Though the products were mainly for domestic consumption they were not totally outside the purview of trade. Great amount of trade in cotton handloom products had operated in the hills. Cotton handlooms were processed by indigenous tools and techniques developed through stages of life (Figure 4.1).

Varsangzuali (2018) articulated the steps of cotton processing undertaken by Lushais in the past. Once the cotton was dry, the seeds were separated from the flower (the seeds were mostly preserved for sowing in the next season). Cotton seeds were also used to gear the heads of effigies the Lushais prepared for *Mitthi Rawp Lam*, a ritual for the dead, observed by the Lushais during an important festival called *Mim Kut*. This festival was dedicated to the memory of their dead relatives, underlined by a spirit of thanksgiving and remembrance of the years. The raw cotton was ginned by using a wooden ginning machine called *herawt* (in Mizo language). Then it was teased or cleansed from impurities by using a scotching bamboo called *lasai*. To make yarn out of it, the teased cotton was spun with a hand-spun mill called *hmui*. The yarn is then being under winding process to form skein. The simple instrument used for winding yarn is *ladinlek.* Then, by using *suhvel* the yarn is rolled to turn it into a ball. This ball of yarn is ready to be used for weaving to make cloths (puan) by using *Themkhawl.*[271]

[270] MSA, Aizawl, G-238, CB-19: No.949G. From J. Hezlett, Superintendent of Lushai Hills to Inspector of Schools, Surma Valley and Hill Districts, Silchar, Dated Aijal, the 8th November 1916.
[271] Varsangzuali, Rosaline (2018): *Evolution of Mizo Dress: A Historical Study*, pp. 182-184. Also see Lalnunmawii Khiangte (2013), A Study on Factors Affecting Changes in Mizo Dressings, A Master of Design Thesis, submitted to the Department of Design Space, National Institute of Fashion Technology, Mumbai, 11-12.

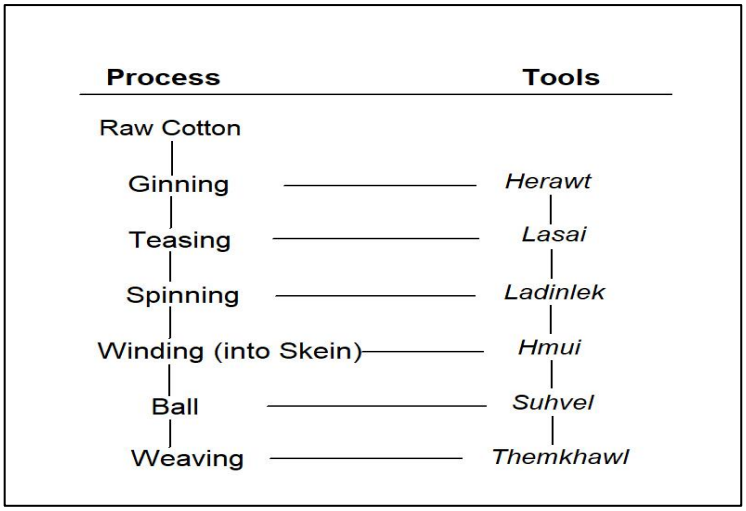

Figure 4.1: Lushai's cotton processing techniques and tools *(prepared by author)*

The Lushai handloom weavers were able to produce and display varieties of cloth (puan) in the annual market days organized occasionally by the district administrators. The annual exhibition known as *Thil ensiak tirna* was held in August 12, 1927 at Lammual in Aiawl town, to display, sell or compete for various locally produced articles, reared animals, birds and so on. Large numbers of participants turned up to displaying their products—agricultural produce, poultry, reared animals, arts, crafts, clothes, and so on.[272] From *puan* (cloth and yarn) category, there were 2 pieces of Men's wear (*longi*), 10 *rak puan* (rug) 7 pieces of men's *rak puan*, 196 pieces of *puansilh*, 10 pieces of *Pawi ipte*(small carry bag), 6 pieces of *puansilh* for men, 3 pieces of *Thangchhuah puan*, 3 pieces of *Kawr chei* (large carry bag), 47 pieces of *puandum* (traditional Mizo shawl), 48 pieces of *puanpui* (large quilt/blanket/mat), 53 pieces of *Pawi puan*, 101 pieces of *Ipte chei*, 55 pieces of *Ipte naran*, 5 pieces of *Sahmim ipte*, 18 pieces of *mawza (shock)* leh *banian*(banyan), 71 pieces of *puanfen*, 14 pieces of *puanrin*, 4 pieces of *beram hmul puan* (wollen cloth), one piece of *maimaw puan*, 77 pieces of *puanchei*, 2 pieces of *chawngnak puan*, and three other unknown quantities—*Tawlhloh puan*, *Sahmul puan* of *Vahluk* and *Thehlei* firs, and *Pawi hren*. The first prize for *Puan* was Rs.3, the second Rs.2 and the third was Re.1.[273] Thus, the Lushais had already learned the idea of making cloth or yarn out of cotton handloom before some of the administrators took keen interest in full commercialization of the products.

[272] MVCB, ATC, Aizawl, Bu 5na, August 1927, p.172.
[273] MVCB, ATC, Aizawl, Bu 5na August 1927, p.173-174.

The Reid House—Lushai Hills Cottage Industries

Inspired by the enthusiasm and potentiality the local producers had, a British officer was inclined to take interest in cotton handloom industry in the Lushai Hills district. In 1936, A.G. McCall, the Superintendent or *Bawrsap* (as Lushais call it) and his wife Mrs. McCall, locally known as Zolute, founded the Lushai Hills Cottage Industries[274] or the Cottage Industries Organisation.[275] McCall served as the Superintendent of Lushai Hills District from 1931 to 1943. After five years of his tenure, he put into practice the idea of promoting a cottage organisations to propel the locally processed cotton into the world of cloth markets. The *Lushai Chrysalis* (1949) explained the motive and history of the origin and development of the Lushai cottage or cotton-based industries in the district. McCall viewed that it was a part of modern administrative policy to harness the traditional skills that the hill people might have in them. He believed that the skills could further usher them to the world of modern trade and commerce (p.269). He observed that the Lushais possessed skills in cotton weaving on handloom, which was traditionally used since their forefathers' time. The cottage industries organisation consisted of the McCall couple, articulate Lushais and real Lushais. It aimed to connect the Lushai cotton products with the Bengal Home Industries Association of Calcutta, an organization sponsored by the Government of Bengal, which undertook efforts to encourage the indigenous cottage industries in the Province. The economic objective of the Lushai industries was to develop skills to reach their products to commercial markets so that they would have something rely on during unprecedented failure of rice crop on which the people mainly depended upon (p.270). So, cotton was considered the second line of defense for the Lushais in times of unforeseen economic hardship.

An important reason for organizing cottage industries in the Lushai Hills, as stated by Call, was to counter the revivalist cult movement among many adherents of the Welsh mission. An instance of one such movement was found at Kelkang village where numerous adherents were using tongues to purportedly represent the Holy Ghost within them, the meaning of which was not known to themselves and anyone else. They claimed to be the medium through which God spoke to men, and that they had no choice in the selection of

[274] It was later known as Lushai Hills Cottage Industries, and also plainly called sometimes as Reid House since the works were carried out in a building named after Robert Reid, the Governor of Assam, who became the patron of the industries. It was purely a non-governmental organisation run privately by the Superintendent and his wife. See A.G. McCall (2004 reprint): *Lushai Chrysalis*, Spectrum Publication: Guwahati, 269-279.

[275] Lalthansanga (2016), Agricultural Administration and Its Coordination in Mizoram, 614.

the words they spoke out (p.220). McCall was deeply concerned against such socio-religious movement and so felt the need to discourage such activity among the Lushais. So he attempted to drift their daily attention from excessive spiritual to commercial activities such as cotton cultivation and cottage industries. He obtained a full support of his wife, Zolute, who took it as a 'whole-time job' to look after the commercial organization among the Lushais who hardly had any knowledge or precedent to guide them 'towards the very distant goal of success' (p.270). So, the Cottage Industries Organisation in Lushai Hills was established in view of social and economic considerations.

The *Bawrsap (*McCall), and his wife diligently took initiative to tap the traditional skills of the locals and attempted to connect the products with larger and wider marketplaces outside Lushai Hills. They also aimed that the industry would bring a financial return among the Lushai weavers as they felt the latter did not have opportunity to sell their skill for anything. (p.270). He financed the project from his own salary and borrowing from the Government and the bank. This organisation would have not been successful had McCall's skilful and enthusiastic wife had not shared his vision among the people (p.270). The couple was exploring the local skill in cotton weaving and handloom and out-sourcing the products as a profitable sale in the markets.

The first step the organisation took was selecting an article which could be made, or if already made, which could be placed in competitive markets at a price which would give appropriate return for their industry. So, by March 1936, the organisation got a white rug made of unspun locally grown cotton, and accepted it to be sold. Then they began rug production which was set in hand by indigenous tools. They sent emissaries visiting various villages with small samples of what was required by the joint organisers. However, the first consignment the organisation received and sent out for sale was not up to standard. So the outside buyers were not ready to accept the next consignment of similar quality any more (p.271). But many villages of distant locations had already made white rugs in full swing in response to the previous orders of the joint organisers. They have all set their hands on the looms. Although the joint organisers in Aizawl stated that they could only accept rugs up to one month, the village producers had already made huge quantities of rugs of the same standard as before. McCall expressed,

> For these dreary weeks rug after rug triumphantly and expectantly unfolded on the veranda of the Superintendent's residence, where all the business was being carried on

> for want of suitable accommodation. Each of the rug was duly measured, checked for standard, and paid for, with the full knowledge that one unfair refusal would spell ruin for ever to any hopes in the future.(271)

It is interesting to note that the joint organisers paid full price on all the rugs that piled up in the residence of the Superintendent of Lushai Hills. Each rug was paid seven shillings and six pence, which according to McCall was irrecoverable. Mrs. Zolute, with her daughter, worked hard make the industry running. As a result they lost about one hundred pounds right in the beginning of the business. McCall expressed that they 'stood to gain nothing except the anticipated satisfaction over the knowledge that their efforts would bring comfort and relief to many poor families' (p.272). In regard to the efforts given by the Call family to improve the quality of the clothes, a Lushai clerk in the Superintendent's bungalow wrote,

> Now *Bawrsap* has come to know a market to sell the *puan* [cloth]. But the *puan* has to be different from the previous ordinary ones. The quality has to be improved and quite standardized to cope with the demand of the market. The pieces that he last bought needed to be re-processed and improved. For this he had hired a Mizo (Lushai) woman to do the job. Since this is a tedious and cumbersome work for a single person, Madam Zolute and her daughter, took responsibility to take up this task and worked untiringly all day and night.[276]

Zolute sent out notices to proclaim that the organisation accepted handmade cotton cloths, rugs, and local garments. The unsalaried and ordinary Lushai people were keen to this invitation. They started making rugs from the cotton they cultivated. In 1937, Makthanga, the chief of Aizawl and member of the organisation, wrote about the importance of making money and the trickle-down effect of wealth in society as,

> We should be aware that if and when any household in the village makes money, all residents of the village usually benefit from it. We had witnessed such mutual benefits especially after the War when our brave Lushai men returned home from foreign lands. We benefitted a lot from them even though we did not belong to their families.[277]

[276] MVCB, ATC, Aizawl, Bu 9na, September 1936: Puanpui, p.158.
[277] MVCB, ATC, Aizawl, Bu 5na, May 1937: Lushai Hills Cottage Industries, p.77.

Makthanga further mentioned three important instructions for the Lushai weavers. First, they should faithfully supply the amount or quantities of *Puanpui* (rug) to Zolute without fail whenever the latter demanded. Second, *Puanpui* should be adroitly made and categorized into *lenlam* (net-typed), *failam* (clean/smooth variety), and *pawr chhah* (rough/course variety). Third, he also instructed that in weaving, weak women should be helped by the menfolk tremendously. This concern was much anticipated from the village chiefs particularly for the welfare of their people.[278]

Makthanga further reported the differential prices of raw cotton and the finished products. The price of ginned cotton was nearly Rs. 6/- or Rs. 5/8/- per maund. But when the cotton was made into *puanpui* (rug), 4 pieces of it made one maund, and one piece cost Rs. 4/8/- which was about Rs. 18/- in total. Besides, they did not have to worry for buyers as the cottage industry organisation was ready to buy their products. Besides, they need not worry about the possible damage or preservation of the goods. The producers would also have ample times to attend to their family matters while continuing to work on their looms. One maund of *La-lhum* (reel or string of yarn) cost Rs. 12 in the market. The cost of 10 maund of *La-lhum* was comparable to a Mizo bride price.[279] In this backdrop, the introduction of Lushai cottage industry was a direct contest to the existing raw cotton export outside the district through river transports. Makthanga emphatically wrote,

> For us, who are economically backward and have no source of income, this is the best means to earn money while working from home. We should be aware of the fact that we can cultivate *la* (cotton) in our lands for export. So far, people in the river banks have been cultivating and transporting cotton to valley markets by river ferries. This is not profitable at all. *Bawrsap* knew that it is more profitable to sell the finished cotton than the raw.[280]

After much effort, in the mid-1936, the second sample of white rug passed the test for export to a Calcutta market. McCall expressed, 'one was of an outstanding success' after thorough and careful check (p.272). The organisation hired a skilled women named Mampui[281] to trained Lushai volunteers (especially women) on the 'preparation of cotton

[278] MVCB Bu 5na, May 1937: Lushai Hills Cottage Industries, p.77.
[279] MVCB Bu 5na, May 1937: Lushai Hills Cottage Industries, p.77.
[280] MVCB Bu 4na, April 1937: Lushai Hills Cottage Industries, p.64.
[281] MVCB Bu 5na, May 1937: Lushai Hills Cottage Industries, p.79.

and its method of introduction into the warp'. Mampui was told, after being trained, to pass her skill on to other willing village-weavers too. To this, Makthanga stated,

> Our *Bawrsap* couple understand the importance of meeting the standard of goods demanded by buyers. To make our effort successful, they hired a skilled woman named Mampui to train us, and then called upon people from different villages to learn the skill of *puantah* (weaving). This is the way Christians should treat others… Then several trained persons promised to further teach other girls in their villages. Then, as soon as *Bawrsap* received a demand from the plains, they asked the trained weavers to start making *puans*, and fixed the quantities and time of *puans* they demanded.[282]

An old shed in the garden of the Superintendent was utilised to carry out weaving and handloom training exercises. Lushai women scaled the art of weaving and making standard cloths, and also proved that products were export-oriented in quality. Soon stocks of Lushai rugs classified into 'good, bad, and indifferent' were accumulated in the house of the District Superintendent (p.273). Each rug that met the required standard was paid for at a scheduled rate. Yet only two out of every ten rugs (20%) proved marketable (p.272). Later on the price of poorly made rugs were reduced, but the makers were given a slip guaranteeing a full price if or when they returned with a top standard quality that worth a full purchase price. The organisation did not want to upset the local producers as the latter were in a beginning stage of the trade (p.273).

Aizawl town, situated over 100 miles from railway, accessible by bridle roads, dangerous and rocky rivers, was a centre for cotton commerce in the Assam province during the British rule. The Lushai handloom products found its networks of trade outside the district (Figure 4.2). McCall reported that the first grade cotton product from Aizawl was then accepted by the Imperial Tobacco Company of India. R.G. Baker, the manager of the company, went to Aizawl to accept the first grade rugs as a gift from the cottage organisation. Then gradually the number of saleable rugs in every ten purchased increased. The stocks of white rugs of sub-standard ranks were also soon absorbed by outside markets that were dealing in it. Demand began to outstrip supply as the demand, particularly, for the coloured rugs increased tremendously (p.273).

[282] MVCB Bu 5na, May 1937: Lushai Hills Cottage Industries, p.79.

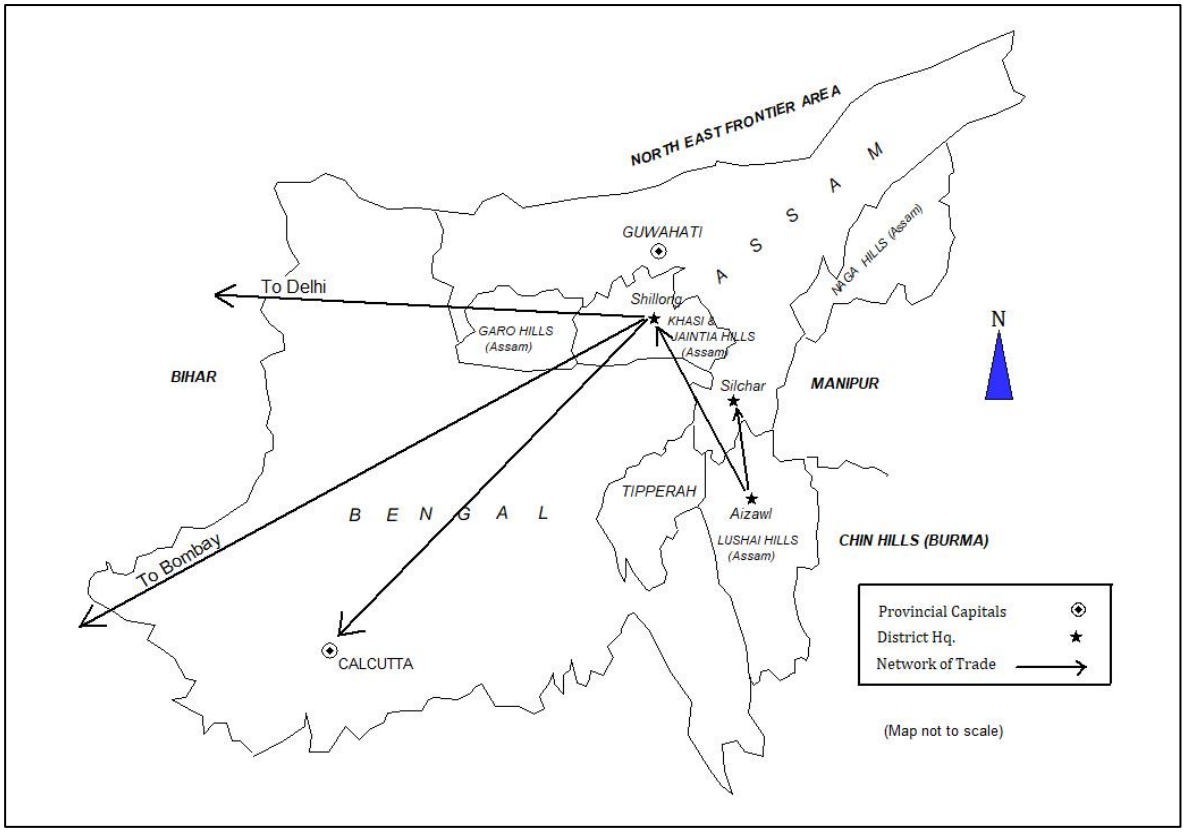

Figure 4.2: Network of processed cotton trade in colonial Lushai Hills (prepared by author)

Making of coloured rugs improved too. To attain specialization in design and pigmentation, the organisation sent few young Lushais for a training course on synthetic dyeing to Havero Trading Company at Calcutta. The trainees were imparted a first class teaching in synthetic dyeing based on German dyes. As dyeing involved innumerable boiling, vegetable dyes, which were practised locally, were not able to meet a commercial standard (p.274). Shortly each cotton-producing village got a trained dyer. Each village was allotted with a special colour as demanded by the outside buyers. The cottage organisation also provided the dyers with dyes at free of cost. The village dyers were paid according to the standard of rugs he or she was able to dye. In this way the cotton handloom in the Lushai Hills created an ancillary job—village dyeing.

By this time the Lushai Hills Cottage Industries was not only founded, but was growing from small beginnings to high standard of cotton production. Division and specialisation of labour made the work much efficient. As the Superintendent's residence was swamped with stocks of Lushai rug and ginned cotton, some workers did a book-keeping and others packaging materials. Sir Robert Reid, the Governor of Assam, and his

wife Lady Reid, patronised the Lushai cottage Industries. The Reid couple felt the need of adequate size of house to stockpile the Lushai goods. They constructed a house at the centre of Aizawl for the organisation which was named Reid House, a name after the couple, the patrons. The house provided for an office, large stock room, dye room, and large picking or packaging room. The Assam Industries Association in Shillong also known as *Samabai Ghar* ('Cooperation House'), became the main partner of the Lushai cotton cloth exports. This Association in Shillong was founded by the Lady Reid herself. With the assistance of the local Khasi residents, Lady Reid organised the *Samabai Ghar* for the purpose of buying and selling the products of cottage industries across the Assam province (p.274).

The Lushai Hills Cottage Industries or Reid House flourished substantially within a couple of year. Lushais handloom workers were capable of making atleast seven kinds of articles such as white rugs, coloured rugs, net money bags, cane works, luncheon mats, handbags and aprons, which they sold to Reid House in Aijal. The chief markets of the articles were Shillong, Silchar, Calcutta, Delhi and Bombay. Since the articles comfortably got access of outside markets the asset of the Lushai cottage organisation had increased to double the capital invested. In fact, the Government also 'assisted the industries latterly by a grant for a period of three years'. This grant helped the industry stride on to its way of expansion (p.274).

The Reid House and the sale of cotton products had achieved its objective in respect of the socio-economic life of the Lushais. McCall wrote that the Reid House was able to ensure 'a second cash string to its bow' if the rice crop failed. It became a reliable insurance or back-up to rice economy. The skilled women and their role in the household economy had been highly recognised. Reid House also encouraged the traditional skills and designs of the Lushais in handlooms and safeguarded its survival. It further gave new vista of hope to prisoners by training them in cottage industries and also buying the products made by them. In many occasion, released prisoners had been 'set own their legs in this way' (p.278). McCall expressed that the cottage industries might have not prevented the outbreak of Kelkang movement, but there was no further occurrence of 'chronic abandon among the people' like the Kelkang incident among the Lushai Christian adherents (p.278). The industry had taught the Lushai people the importance of commerce in uplifting their economic standards in the face of modern social and economic transitions around the world. The profitability of making clothes and other related products cannot be

understated. McCall suggested that the price of a rug was comparable to what an abled man could get by carrying fifty pound load fifteen miles a day for ten continuous days without a stop. Moreover, the rug production was not time-consuming exercise. It could be produced without having to leave his/her house for more than three hours in all, and the rest could be utilised in processing at home (p.277).

A.G. McCall was one of the longest administrators of the Lushai Hills district—1931-1943. His period saw remarkable progress in free enterprises especially in the cotton handloom industries. Although the initial period had to struggle to survive in the competitive markets, the cotton products from Lushai Hills slowly evolved into a highly demanded articles from the Shillong and other markets. The joint organisers gave tireless efforts to sustain the industries even in times of shortages. The zeal for free-trade and enterprise shown by the Lushai elites in the history of Reid House was remarkable. Lushai educated individuals (who were members of the organisation too) volunteered to toil the Lushai countries for motivational campaigns and promotion of the cottage industry in times of scarcity of supply. Prominent individuals such as Chhuakhama (the Senior Pastor of the Welsh Mission), Pachhunga (the most influential Lushai trader in the Hills), and Thanga (a member of the Presbytery and Government employee) volunteered to toil the villages for the said campaign (p.278).

Inspired by the activity of Reid House, the young generations were encouraged in vocational trainings and entrepreneurship. McCall made an account of one Katie Hughes of Welsh Mission, an in charge of girls' education in the North Lushai Hills. She incorporated the 'growing and processing of cotton' in her own project lesson in the Mission school. Miss Hughes encouraged and even trained a group of young girls to assist her in this project. The girls then made up small doormats, as exercises, which were purchased by Reid House in Aijal, without any commercial consideration. To McCall, hence, the future of the industries 'augurs well, in no small way' because the indigenous people took keen interest in learning the skills in production of articles that were marketable even outside the Hills (p.279). He even inspired the Lushai traders to organise themselves into a trading society in consideration of his limited tenure as the district's Superintendent.

In 1940 at Aizawl, the Lushai Trading Company was formed among the Lushai veteran traders such as Thanga, Pachhunga, Chawnga and others. The aim and object of the

Company, as stated by the founder member Thanga, was to earn money from the plains by trading, exporting the village products to enrich and improve their economic conditions. The Company dealt in various good items including cloth, medicines, and others. The Company first made their export-import experiment at Tipaimukh bazaar with a capital of Rs. 6000, and got a good outturn.[283] However, the system of trade changed after 1943 due to the introduction of several emergency rules and regulations by the government of India.

Downfall of trade in cotton products

Cotton handloom in Lushai Hills flourished for almost a decade (1936-1943). After navigating through quality question in the products, problem of ready markets and networks, to great extent the weavers' dreams were realised thanks to the relentless endeavour of the McCall family, and members of the joint organisers of the Lushai Hills Cottage Industries. Cotton handloom trade in Lushai Hills reached its zenith during these years. Significant numbers of Lushais had become dealers on cloth and yarn following the success of Reid House. For instance, Messrs. Pachhunga and Sons, a merchants and government contractors, was a local enterprise dealing in various goods and commodities such as garments, arms and ammunitions, patent medicines, general goods supply, etc. with its centre/base in Aijal and Silchar.[284] There were other Lushai entrepreneurs dealing in cloth and yarn like Messrs. Rosema and Sons Company and H. K. Hleia & Brothers both based at Thakthing bazaar (Aizawl).[285] Messrs. Lianzinga shop was also one of the Lushai enterprises which took up the job of a general merchant and order supplier and mostly dealing in cloth and general goods at Aijal. However, the weavers' bliss was short-lived as it was disrupted since the next decade –early1940s. Not the products of the Lushai cottage industry alone, but also trade in cotton cloth and yarn was affected by the War (1939-45) and enactment laws related to it. Other factors of the downfall of Lushai cottage industries includes state's ill-conceived co-operation movements introduced in the Lushai Hills, and the departure of Zolute depriving the Reid House of capable manager.

[283] MSA, Aizawl, G-611, C.B-48: Lushai Trading Company, dated 26th June 1947.
[284] MSA, Aizawl, General Department (1948), G-559, Cabin No. 44: Letter to the Superintendent of Lushai Hills from Messrs. Pachhunga & Sons, Merchants & Govt. Contractors, Dated Aijal, 6th January 1943.
[285] MSA, Aizawl, General Department (1948), G-559, Cabin No. 44: Letter to the Assistant Superintendent, Arms Department, Lushai Hills, from Messrs. Rosema & Sons, dated Aijal 5th January 1943.

Throughout 1948, Reid House in Aizawl had no more stock of local handloom products usually supplied to *Samabai Ghar* or the Assam Co-operative Cottage Industries Ltd. in Shillong (hereafter ACCIL). The Secretary (of ACCIL) also informed that as there was no Lushai articles left to send for exhibition in other cities such as Delhi, they were compelled to turn away customers who had demanded goods supplied by Reid House of Aizawl. The letter further mentioned that items of the Lushai goods that were highly demanded included Lushai rugs of all colours and size, Lushai bags and curtain materials, hand woven materials.[286] The prevailing shortage of controlled cloths and yarn was felt all over the District. When the Superintendent of Textile Control in Aizawl asked them to reveal the quantity of stock remained, almost all cloth dealers officially reported that they had no more stock of the said commodity.[287] Some of the important factors that is assessed to lead the decline of cotton handloom cloths and yarns in the Lushai Hills were: Emergency law passed by the Central Government for control of cloths and yarns, the introduction of strict license system, internal dissensions among the trading groups, Decline of the Reid House, and the failure of state-sanctioned cooperatives.

Control Raj and 'Control Puan'

What had happened to the cotton cloth and yarn supplies in all over India was felt deeply in the Assam and other provinces too. The Government of India passed the Defence of India Act, 1939 (DIA), in September 1939. The Defence of India Rules thereof authorised the Central as well as the Provincial governments to issue various types of Orders from time to time as 'occasions and circumstances demanded'.[288] Consequent to this Act, the Department of Industries and Civil Supplies (Central Government) passed the *Cotton Cloth and Yarn (Control) Order, 1943.* In line with this, various provincial governments passed Orders as an 'an emergency measure to mobilise production for the War effort and to deal with consumer shortages'.[289] In November 1945, the Government of Assam (Supply Department) also implemented the Order (1943) by incorporating certain rules such as, for

[286] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-756, Cabin No. 61: Letter to the Manager, Reid House, Aijal
[287] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-723, Cabin No. 58: No. DHAS. 1/48/15 of 1948, Textile, Deputy Commissioner, Aizawl.
[288] Desai, Krishnakant Mohanlal (1944), *War-Time Restrictions* (A Compendium of Orders, Notifications, Acts and Ordinances affecting Business and Trade issued by the Central Government and the Government of Bombay incorporating amendments up to 31st December 1943), p.i.
[289] De, Rohit (2014): Commodities Must Be Controlled: Economic Crimes and Market Discipline in India (1939-1955), *International Journal of Law in Context,* 10:3, p.227, Cambridge University Press doi:10.1017/S1744552314000123. In this connection, the Bihar Province passed the Essential Supplies (Temporary Powers) Act 1947 and Bihar Cotton, Cotton and Yarn (Control Order), 1948.

instance, compulsory license for dealing in cloths, fixing the limit of quantity of cloth or yarn permitted to purchase or sell by any dealer,[290] fixing of the maximum price of cloth and yarn.[291] Since, then the government began to control 'puan' (cloth), issue rules for trade license in the Lushai Hills district. The DIA, 1939 and its Rules eventually created scarcity of cloths and yarns in the district.

The Cotton Control Order indirectly affected the manufacturers (weavers) of Lushai Hills indirectly and wholesalers and retailers directly. There were around 25 registered 'wholesalers and retailers'[292] of Textile goods within the year 1948-1949. The government (Textile Control Department at Aizawl) fixed the limit of textile bales permitted to each distributor. In average about two to three bales of cotton textiles are allowed for a shop. When all the available shops are clubbed, about 37 bales of cloths in total was permitted by the government to sell out or supply elsewhere for one particular time in the whole Aizawl bazaars.[293] This, however, is indicative of the decay of *laissez-faire* and the indication of state control and interference on enterprises and private business which would slowly chock the flow of goods and commerce shortly.

Separate license system each for cloth and yarn dealers that was never practised before was introduced for the first time in Lushai Hills. New rules and regulations such as separate license system for cloth and yarn dealers, ceiling on prices and quantities cloths and yarns for wholesalers and retailers, monetary fees for license, security deposits of dealers, etc. were never heard of by the local entrepreneurs. In the past, all traders were given free pass for any business and a monthly fixed rent was collected by the government for every frontage of shop in Aizawl or any other town. Since 1948, a wholesaler was charged Rs.20, and a retailer, a hawker and a petty dealer Rs.10 each for obtaining a licence cloth and yarn license. The government also warned the dealers of dire consequences if found storing or selling cloth or yarn without license; his or her store would be seized and would be forfeited by the government for breaking the rules. It further announced that

[290] MSA, Aizawl, CB-52, G-652: S. N. Das, Secretary to the Government of Assam, Department of Supply, Dated the 12th November 1945.
[291] Desai (1944), *War-Time Restrictions*, p.38.
[292] In fact, the wholesalers were the village weavers too, besides these wholesalers and retailers. The document did not specify the wholesalers from retailers or vice versa. See MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-731, Cabin No. 59: Rural Development Department, Aijal Subdivision, Lushai Hills. Report to the Assistant Secretary to the Government of Assam, Textile Department, from the Superintendent of Lushai Hills, dated Aijal, the 17th May 1949.
[293] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-731, Cabin No. 59.

those who had more than one shop in the town or in the villages of the whole Lushai Hills, they would have to obtain separate license for each shop or stall.[294]

Considerable hardships had also been faced by cloth and yarn traders of Aizawl in regard to procurement of the commodities from outside. Agents and dealers were required to produce special permits from their district and subdivisional officers before stocks are sold to them in Calcutta. In October 1944, the Calcutta Commission Agents (agent selected by Assam's Government) informed that the Assam dealers are required to produce special permits from their district and subdivisional officers before cloth is sold to them. After getting the special permission, they had to contact Messr Shaw Wallace, the sole permit-holders for Assam province.[295] This miserably made the procurement process slower, troublesome and time-consuming. Nominating a single cloth agent for all traders of cloth and yarn of the whole Assam province consisting of numbers of districts and subdivisions made business inevitably tardy and unfree. Such newly introduced rules or system which had never been witnessed or experienced virtually appalled the novice cloth dealers and traders of geographically distant hill districts such as Lushai Hills.

The new rules of business also obstructed free buying and selling of stocks of cloth and yarn by dealers. To procure cloth and yarn from outside Lushai Hills a single agent was being selected from the whole district by the Superintendent which was a sign of future shortage and inefficiency of business in this commodity. For instance, since the early 1940s, Messr. Mon Kumar Guha enterprise, which was a general merchant, order supplier, and most importantly, distributor of Lushai Hill Cottage Industries based in Silchar and Aijal, could not deliver certain cloth consignments from Silchar to Aizawl citing transportation difficulty. This lapsed period of about one season, monsoon of 1944, had allowed acute shortage of the commodity to creep into the Lushai Hills' markets. The Senior Superintendent in Aizawl declared that Rualkhuma's trading license had expired in September 1944, and decided to arrange a new agent for cloth procurement outside. On the 10th October of the year Rualkhuma requested the government to 'reconsider' its previous 'order' and allow him to deal with cloth and yarns under the license already

[294] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-731, Cabin No. 59: Notice made by the Superintendent to the traders in Lushai Hills.
[295] MSA, Aizawl, CB-51, G-650: To the Secretary Civil Supplies, Calcutta from M. Hussain, Additional Secretary to the Govt. of Assam. Dated 3rd October 1944.

granted to him.[296] His license was renewed for another six months (till 9th July 1945) by Aizawl administration only on 8th December 1944.[297] However, the Guha agent continued to go through the ordeal. On 30th January 1945, Mon Kumar Guha dealer, from Silchar, wrote to the Superintendent of Lushai Hills that without his help he could not procure cloth and yarn in reasonable rate, and so requested the Superintendent to allow him to purchase the same like others. He further stated his readiness to deposit money if required.[298] Such was one of the many possible instances that any traders had to experience under the excessive state control of commerce under the new Cotton and Yarn Control rules. It is apparent that the free flow of goods and services had completely halted.

Adding distress to the traders and the already sluggish flow of business, in May 1945 the Supply Department-Textile Branch (Assam) announced that the Government Procurement System in Assam province had closed down. The Superintendent of Lushai Hills and that of other districts of Assam had to procure cloth either from Calcutta or Bombay on their own capacity. And the financial and all other risks would entirely be with the dealer.[299] This had become another herculean task for traders as they bear the extra cost for transport from Calcutta or Bombay on their own. While it would be natural for the traders to increase the price of commodities considering the transport cost incurred for far distances, the Rules had already set maximum prices for them which undeniably thinned out the prospect of a profitable trade. On 13th May 1948, the Superintendent of Lushai Hills invited applications from 'only reliable firms' in Aijal, dealing in cloth, to procure cloth either from Bombay or from Calcutta stating that the government would render all possible help, but the financial and all other risks to be entirely with the dealers so appointed.[300] Out of the two applicants that turned up, Messr. Chhotelal Seth & Co. Silchar & Aijal base was selected as the distributing Agents for the Aijal Subdivision both for cloth and yarn.[301]

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[296] MSA, Aizawl, CB-51, G-650: Letter to Senior Assistant Superintendent, Lushai Hills, Dated .10th October 1944, Aijal

[297] MSA, Aizawl, CB-51, G-650: To Messr Monkumar Guha and Sons, from Superintendent, Lushai Hills, dated 8th December 1944.

[298] MSA, Aizawl, CB-52, G-652: From Mon Kumar Guha, to Superintendent, Lushai Hills, dated 30th January 1945.

[299] MSA, Aizawl, CB-52, G-652: John Perry, Under Secretary to the Government of Assam, to the Superintendent of Lushai Hills, dated Shillong, 6th May 1945.

[300] MSA, Aizawl, CB-52, G-652: Notice by Superintendent, Lushai Hills, Dated Aijal, the 13th May 1048.

[301] MSA, Aizawl, CB-52, G-652, No. 307-10/PC Dated 6.10.1948: To Messr. Procure & Supply (Assam) Corporation, Guwahati, from Superintendent of Lushai Hills.

State excessive control on *puan* (cloth) might have discouraged the infant handloom industries in the Lushai hills to the extent of causing to dry up stocks of the dealers. Further, the ceilings on the quantities and prices of cloth and yarn in addition to the extra-cost of transportation from far-off distances like Calcutta or Bombay, might too have limited the sufficient supplies of cloth and yarn in the Lushai Hills district. In an a step to further control commodity hoarding, and to sustain supply, the administration (Textile Control Department) in Lushai Hills also notified that every textile dealers in the district had to report whether he/she had any stock of cloth or yarn remaining. Almost all of the firms/dealers in Lushai Hills submitted reports to the Superintendent, in December 1948, that they had no 'controlled cloths' or yarns left with them. Some of them even said that they had stopped dealing with *'puan* leh *la*' [302] (cloth and yarn) totally. Besides, as only one agent appointed by the government was allowed to procure all required cloth and yarn for a whole district, shortage of supply is definitely bound to occur.

Within three years the role of the Superintendent of Lushai Hills had changed from facilitator of trade to controller of trade following the implementation of the Cotton Cloth and Yarn (Control) Order 1945. In the state archives dated 1948, there are a bunch of hand-written letters submitted by Lushai cotton traders addressed to the 'Superintendent i/c Textile Control', the district officer came to be firmly identified with a rigid regime of textile control, which might be regarded as president for the notorious licence Raj in in post-Independence India. The local Lushais amusingly internalised the language of war-time restriction. A Lushai man Lianzinga reported in Mizo language, 'Kan hnen ah *control puan* heng zawng hi ala awm' (I still have these control cloths with me).[303] Likewise, Darinpuii of Sialsuk village reported, 'Kan *control puan* hral chu vawi in… ah kan la hral lo zawng chu hei ka han hriat tir leh ache' (I hereby report the quantities of control cloths that remained unsold till date).[304]The Lushai cotton cloth dealers frequently used the term 'control puan'(controlled cloth) in their letters. It is not difficult to imagine how devastating the war-time license regime must have been for the Lushai traders in general and cotton dealers in particular. If the British administration continued restrictive law after the end of World War II, the fate of Lushai Hills Cottage Industries would be doomed.

[302] MSA, Aizawl, G-723, CB-58, No. DHAS 1/48/15 of 1948: Textile, from the Deputy Commissioner, Aizawl.
[303] MSA, Aizawl, G-58, C.B-723: From Lianzinga, Shopkeeper, Kukikawn, Aijal, to Superintendent, Lushai Hills, dated 3.12.1948.
[304] MSA, Aizawl, G-58, C.B-723: From Darinpuii, Sialsuk village, to Superintendent i/c Textile Control, Lushai Hills, dated 16.12.1948.

Unfortunately the British government was in no hurry to repeal neither the Defence of India Act 1939, nor the Cotton Cloth and Yarn (Control) Order 1943. The anti-colonial Indian nationalists protested against the sufferings of the textile traders; but they did not repeal the war-time laws that impeded domestic trade. In fact, the national government of India decided in 1955 to retain the law in the statute book permanently.[305]

The Idea of Co-operatives and the State

The Rural Development of Assam was a pioneer in promoting the idea of co-operative in British Assam. Since 1948, the Government of Assam promoted Rural Development Board inspired by the idea of co-operative through 'self-help grants'[306] provided by the government. The idea of 'co-operatives' was not directly transplanted from British soil into colonial Assam immediately in the post-war period, the concept of co-operatives was conceived as part and parcel of rural development. In the late 1940s, a memo titled 'The Economics of Rural Development' was circulated among the district officers of Assam. The Government of Assam was keenly aware of the devastation in the aftermath of the Japanese invasion of Assam. War-time legislation such as Cotton and Yarn (Control) Order 1943 had a stranglehold on the yarn and cotton trade in the Lushai Hills District of Assam. That explains why the British district officials were enthusiastic about the idea of 'rural development'. A memo was circulated under the heading of 'Rural Development Policy in the Excluded Areas'[307]. A copy of this circular was sent to the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills District.

So obsessed were the bureaucrats with the concept of rural development that they neglected to address problems of supply chain linking towns and villages in the cottage industries. In practice, rural development translated into co-operative societies as part of government bureaus whose primary function was to dole out subsidies and self-help grants

[305] De, Rohit (2014): Commodities Must Be Controlled: Economic Crimes and Market Discipline in India (1939-1955), *International Journal of Law in Context,* 10:3, p.227, Cambridge University Press doi:10.1017/S1744552314000123. In this connection, the Bihar Province passed the Essential Supplies (Temporary Powers) Act 1947 and Bihar Cotton, Cotton and Yarn (Control Order), 1948. p. 278.
[306] MSA, Aizawl, G-728, CB-59: Copy of Letter No. D.G. 262/48/2, dated Shillong, the 16th December, 1949, from the Secretary to the Government of Assam, Rural Development, to the Adviser to the R.D, the Governor of Assam, Shillong.
[307] MSA, Aizawl, G-728, CB-59: Copy of Letter No. D.G. 262/48/2, dated Shillong, the 16th December, 1949, from the Secretary to the Government of Assam, Rural Development, to the Adviser to the R.D, the Governor of Assam, Shillong.

to rural beneficiaries. In March 1948, a bureaucrat of the Rural Development Department wrote a circular that refused to acknowledge war-time Control Order (1943) as the root cause of Lushai cottage industries and he ignorantly speculated that the post-war downtown was

> For want of adaptation to new conditions with the advancement of civilisation…[U]nless the Government comes to rescue with sufficient funds by way of subsidy the surviving enterprises will also die out in the near future.[308]

He estimated that the Government of Assam should spend Rs. 500,000 expenditure per annum.[309] By 1948 a Rural Development Board had already existed in the Lushai Hills. Members of the board were political appointees by local British administrators. In the Lushai context four village chiefs were incorporated as Rural Development Officers.[310] In May 1948, the manager of Reid House (Lushai Hills Cottage Industries) was also co-opted as a member of the Rural Development Board of the Aizawl Subdivision by the government.[311] Till this co-option, Reid House was managed as a fairly profitable private enterprise. In contrast the Rural Development Board was a statist project that provides subsidies to beneficiaries to be identified by the government in the field of cottage industries.

Co-operatives in Lushai Hills began to develop as a separate bureau within the Assam government. Originally attached to Rural Development Board separate co-operatives came to be established in a number of villages. In September 1949, the local administration in the Lushai Hills reported that Trading Co-operatives had been established at Kawnpui-Mualnuam, Selsih, Sairang and Kolasib villages. The administrators officially ordered Lushai villages to form co-operatives. S. N. Barkataki (Superintendent of Lushai Hills) wrote that the 'people of these [Lushais] villages are being reminded for this purpose'.[312] Robert Owen coined the term 'Cooperative Societies' in 1821 in Lanark

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[308] MSA, Aizawl, G-728, CB-59: From T. S. Heyley, Secretary for Rural Development Department, Assam, to All Deputy Commissioners, Sub-divisional Officers, and Political Officers and the Superintendent of Lushai Hills, Dated Shillong, the 3rd March 1948.
[309] MSA, Aizawl, G-728, CB-59: From T. S. Heyley, Secretary for Rural Development Department, Assam, to All Deputy Commissioners, Sub-divisional Officers, and Political Officers and the Superintendent of Lushai Hills, Dated Shillong, the 3rd March 1948.
[310] MSA, Aizawl, G-728, CB-59: From Ch. Ngurra, Secretary, The Lushai Chiefs' Council to the Superintendent, Lushai Hills, Dated, Durtlang, the 24th May 1948.
[311] MSA, Aizawl, G-728, CB-59: From the Manager, Reid House, to the Superintendent Lushai Hills, dated 25.5.1948.
[312] MSA, Aizawl, General Department, G-756, Cabin No. 61: From Superintendent of Lushai Hills, to Asst. Registrar, Co-operative Society, Hill Region, Assam, Shillong. Dated 14th October 1949.

(Scotland). Owen visualised cooperative societies as a voluntary groups among the industrial workers in urban centres of the early Industrial Revolution in Britain.[313] But in the Lushai Hills cooperatives were offshoots of rural development projects of the government and they were imposed top-down by the district officers. Whereas cooperatives were urban initiatives in industrial Britain, they were rural initiatives in colonial Assam. It has been well observed that Owen was the pioneer of 'two great movements of socialism and cooperation'.[314]

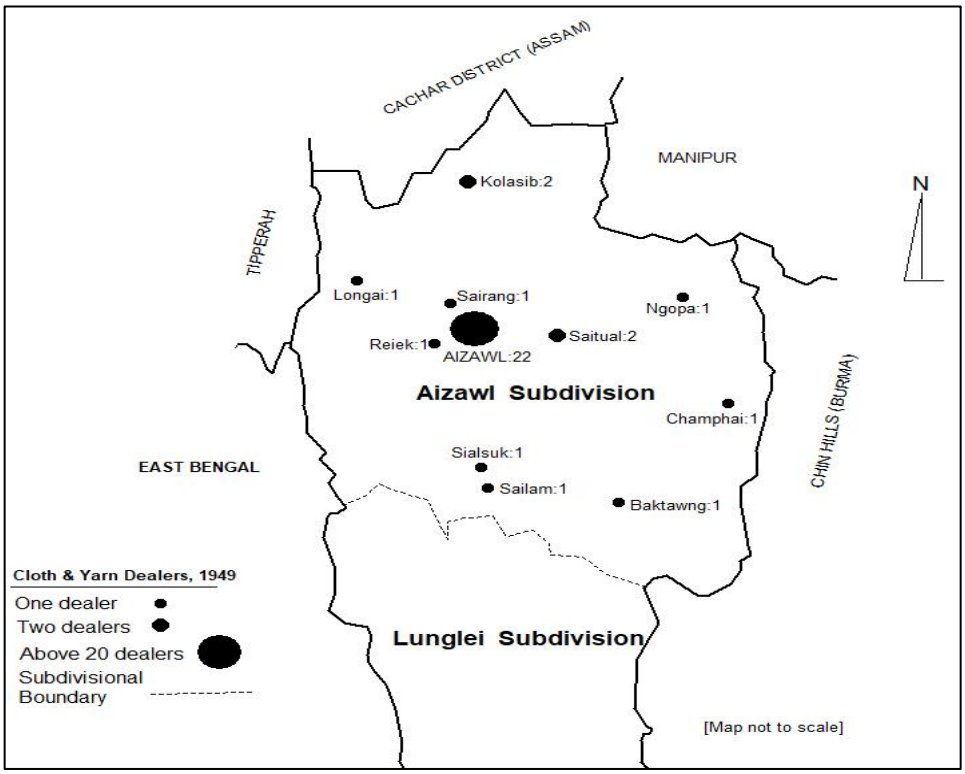

Figure 4.3: Licensed Cloth and Yarn dealers in colonial Lushai Hills *(prepared by author)*. Note: No information on Lunglei Subdivision.

Conclusion

In the Lushai Hills district of Assam Province, road conditions had already improved during the cotton period. Cotton reached as far as the rubber trade could scale. Market destinations for cotton was not within the hills, but outside like Shillong, Calcutta, and as far as Bombay. It has been revealed that Lushai Hills was one of the largest producers of

[313] Thompson (1994): *Weavers of Dreams*, 11.
[314] Owen (1927): A New View of Society and Other Writings, vii.

Garo variety cotton after the Garo Hills in all north eastern states of India during the colonial period. The production quantity and total cultivated area stood just next to Garo Hills. As cotton is inherently outward, the Lushai became outward-looking and export-oriented during the cotton trading period. Raw cotton and processed cotton trade were by far the second line of defence after the wet-rice cultivation. Whereas rice was mainly meant for internal markets, cotton was largely meant for outside markets.

Lushai Rug was the most successful processed cottons that saw markets outside Lushai Hills. The Lushai cottage industries or Reid House could improve their hand-made goods to pass several tests for markets outside Lushai Hills especially the Co-operation House in Shillong (Assam) and then certain companies in Calcutta. The Reid House was the main source of inspiration for village weavers and turned into the skill centre and facilitator of ancillary industries such as dyeing, packaging and so on. The trade was successful to the extent that even demand for Lushai articles exceeded supply.

However, from the 1940s onward there was severe disruption in the supply of cotton products both in terms of volume and productivity. This was not a demand side problem. Production slowed down to the extent that the Reid House was rendered empty of any Lushai goods in spite of being repeatedly demanded from outside. McCall successors did not take keen interest as he, the owner of the Reid House himself, did. The infant industries run by market principle was replaced by bureaucratic ones. Before the Superintendent of Lushai Hills instituted a regime of textile control in 1945, the Lushai Hills Cottage Industries was a profitable company that exported cotton product to city markets across British India. The Company's depot named Reid House (Aizawl) was a symbol of the entrepreneurial Raj during the days of the McCalls. War-time restrictions almost paralysed the operations of the cotton supply change that connected Lushai villages to Aizawl town, as far as metropolitan Bombay.

Cotton had been so subjected under war-time licence regime that the local people began to call this commodity as 'control puan' in Mizo language, meaning 'controlled cloth'. When World War II ended, the restrictions continued and was retained permanently in 1955. The government diagnosed to address the devastation of the Lushai cotton industry and its supply chain as a problem of 'rural development'. Instead of repealing the paralysing impact of the cotton licence, the government poached human resources from the profitable Lushai cottage industries to launch the state-sponsored Rural Development

Board to dole out self-help subsidies in Lushai villages. Not surprisingly, the Lushai cotton handloom industries decayed beyond repair.

Chapter 5
Conclusion

The flow of goods and marketplaces in the Lushai hills (Mizoram) since late nineteenth century shows the Lushais' passion for trade connection with hinterlands and outside, and how the development of trade and commerce fully replaced occasional raid and plunder. This sheds light on the identity of Lushai not as unruly or war-like, but trading community since the pre-colonial period. The Lushai trade in forest-based rubber and ivory transitioned to improved productivity and commercialization of wet-rice alongside cotton handloom productions and exports. This remarkable transition took place within few decades of the colonial dispensation. Most importantly, the construction of road connections in hill areas such as Lushai Hills of Assam province and other corners of the region necessitated linkages of marketing networks between the peripheral areas (Lushai Hills) and core marketplaces (Calcutta, Bombay, etc.). This research also reflects a historical geographies of two or more cultural groups which converged in frontier areas for fulfilling their commercial interest on one hand and British interest in protecting its agrarian communities on the other hand. Moreover, even British conquest of the Lushai hills was linked to the affairs of trade and marketplaces which was hardly accounted for in the history of Mizo (Lushai).

In various ethnographic discourses, the Lushais were often represented as raiding frontier markets and tea estates of the East India Company which were stated to be located in the British territory of Cachar and Chittagong valleys. So Lushais were depicted in history as both traders and raiders. However, the fact that Lushais were traders, not simply raiders, was overshadowed by the Romantic vision of Lushai as 'primitive' tribes or village communities.

Britishers also knew well that the Lushais chiefs always took interest in trade and commerce with plains inhabitants, and they (Lushais) also looked for potential allies for trade as well as political matters. As the Lushais began to doubt the power of their former ally, the king of Hill Tipperah, they looked for relationship with the British, a more powerful ruler, who had come to reign over their neighbouring territories. On the other hand, the British Empire also wanted cordial relation with the independent Lushai chiefs so that the latter would not disturb the plain inhabitants, the British subjects. Many colonial

officers also witnessed the peaceful gestures of the Lushais, and that they were not always war-like but passionate about trade.

In the pre-British period, the Lushais hunted and traded captives for commodities. They saw the profitability of captives for trading, jhuming or hunting. The British could not differentiate the traders from raiders. So they did not want them to frequent the plain marketplaces in their administrative jurisdiction. They had to think an alternative way to keep the Lushais from frequenting the British territories. As the Lushai desired markets for trade, the British resorted to bazaar diplomacy in rubber trade to influence the Lushai behaviour. So they opened three bazaars near rivers in the interior Lushai hills with the objectives: to satisfy Lushais' desire for tradable goods; to open rubber trade markets to plains traders; and most importantly to provide security to the British subjects in their territories. The British had to out-source its security forces since the riverine bazaars lied beyond their territories. The Lushai chiefs got monthly rent from shops in the markets. The common Lushais could access markets within their lands without having to travel far distances.

The riverine bazaars in the Lushai hills lasted for two decades (1871-90). Changsil bazaar in Dhaleswar River was the longest surviving bazaar. Lushais had over-tapped the wild rubber. Some of the chiefs resorted to extortion and loots while others resumed raids in the valleys. Then the British interfered in the bazaar affair directly in the 1890s thus followed the full conquest of the hills. This bazaar history in the pre-colonial rule of the Lushai hills is a corrective to the Romantic notion of self-sufficiency of Indian villages in general and Lushai people in particular. Empirical data on earlier rubber trade dispelled that Lushais lived in 'splendid isolation' and 'sylvan glory'. Instead, it has been empirically proven that the Lushais were not self-sufficient that they were partially dependent on outside trade with agrarian economy beyond the hills. Either through trade or raid the jhum economy of the Lushai hills always maintained commercial contacts with the surrounding peasant economy of the valley. Early commercial history of pre-colonial Lushai hills questioned the romantic narrative of idyllic Indian village community.

The British found Aizawl an ideal location for a permanent military post and an 'advanced depot' as there was a fairly good supply of water, and ten Lushai villages settled

in it. They finally began construction of stockade at Aizawl from February 1890.[315] Slowly the military post gave way to expansion of Aizawl village and those around it, and opening of various bazaars and shops. Bazaar in Aizawl, in fact, was an extension of the declining riverine bazaars such as Changsil. Later on the British forces built a stockade and posted their forces at Sairang village (around 3miles away from Changsil).[316] This stockade is a gateway to Aizawl in the context of northern Lushai hills. With the construction of long bridle roads from Rengti, Silchar (Cachar) town was later connected by road with Aizawl via Sairang.[317]

At the end of the riverine bazaar, the Lushais resumed raiding the surrounding plains inhabitants. But after the full annexation of their lands at the end of the nineteenth century (and at the dawn of the 20th century) they their completely changed. They advanced from mere forest produce traders to sedentary shopkeepers, wet-rice cultivators, and producers and sellers of agricultural products such as rice, cotton, citrus fruits, etc. While their processed goods stormed the local bazaars, they also became important export items outside the Lushai Hills. They were placed on the path of modern trade and entrepreneurship brought about by certain factors, viz. introduction of sedentary wet-rice cultivation, construction of road communication, creating of credit market or loan system, commercialization of crops, and establishment of local handloom (cottage) industries.

Initially the hoe-culture (Jhum) fell short of expectation for rice supply, let alone trading and marketing, for the cultivators, civilians and armed forces settled across the hill district. The British saw the need to improve rice productivity and gave immediate attention, apart from road connectivity, as soon as they fully control the Lushai hills. British officers, after touring the hills, explored the local potentials for rice production by means of wet-rice cultivation. This effort, if successful, would make rice supplies available in the Lushai hills itself instead of exporting from Chittagong or Cachar. One such prominent pioneer was found in the person of Major Shakespear who shared the burden of crop failure due to erratic rainfall on which the hoe based jhum totally depended upon. He tried his best effort in mitigating this inherent hardship by introducing a more advanced

[315] NAI, Delhi, Foreign Department, External A, Proceedings October 1890, Nos.126-144: 'Dated Calcutta, the 2nd June 1890. From W.W. Daly, Officiating Deputy-General of Police, Bengal to the Inspector General of Police, Assam'.
[316] NAI, Delhi, Foreign Department, External A, Proceedings December 1890, Nos. 253-271: 'From R.B. McCabe, to J.W. Quinton,' p.3.
[317] Mizoram State Archives (MSA hereafter), Aizawl, General Department, 1893: 'Annual Report of the North Lushai Hills for the year 1892-93', p.2.

wet-rice or *Leilet* cultivation among the erstwhile jhum cultivators of the Lushai hills. Other officers followed Shakespear's footsteps in promoting *Leilet*. Naturally, jhum or hoe based culture depends on the bounty of monsoonal rain whereas wet-rice based on plough needs only a specific and ideal amount of rainfall, throughout the season. Apart from its higher productivity, *Leilet* is more sustainable as well as dependable than the traditional *jhum* culture.

In the early modern context Studer (2016) argues, development of rice trade and integration of rice markets cannot happen without the existence of improved transport and communication system. In fact, improved road connectivity lowers transport cost. In Lushai Hills district (Mizoram), state policy of road construction intersected with the Leilet movement aimed to commercialise rice produce since the beginning of the British rule. The improvement in road communication across Lushai Hills significantly helped the Leilet movement in the area of technology transfer especially in importing rice seedlings, tools and bullocks for use. The improved and enhanced bridle roads also helped rice traders to save the cost of rice transport to Aizawl and other marketplaces within the hills. The loan system facilitated by the state to farmers also greatly augmented in the success of Leilet.

The production of rice increased, as a result of Leilet movement, and the surplus immediately reached the local marketplaces. The secular price trend of the locally produced Lushai Rice, which was unheard before, had become not only stable, but also decreased later on. This signifies abundance in the supply of Lushai Rice. Interestingly, the presence of Lushai Rice in the bazaar led to the end of Balam Rice (from Assam) and Rangoon Rice (from Burma) too. Therefore local rice from Leilet dominated the rice markets in Lushai Hills (Mizoram) since the 1920s onwards. So, *Leilet* or wet-rice was one of the most important factors that led to transition of rice cultivation from mere subsistence to surplus and then to commercialisation. As the militaries were stationed in different parts of the district, the need for rice supply to the garrisons led to opening of rice shops nearby every military posts. This process further led to integration of markets across the Lushai hills, as stated by Studer (2016). Like the stages of marketplaces found in other places such as Bengal or Assam (Dutta 2012), the rice commerce in Lushai Hills District had undergone certain stages of marketplaces or consumption centres ranging from the *Leilet* villages and military posts nearby to whole-sellers and retailers of both private and

government contracts in Aizawl and other parts of the hills. Therefore, it may be inferred that rice trade consolidated and integrated markets across the Lushai hills.

Apart from the success of wet-rice cultivation, the government facilitated several food and cash crops among the Lushai farmers throughout their period of administration (about 50 years). However, no crop was as successful as cotton cultivation specifically of Garo variety. In fact, cotton was locally grown by the Lushai farmers before the advent of the British. However, the colonial dispensation saw highly commercialised and processed cotton in the economic history of the Lushai Hills. Cotton cultivation and trade was considered as the second line of defence for the Lushai economy, next to rice. Lushai Hills was reported to be the second highest producer of cotton in the Assam province in the twentieth century.

The British administrator, particularly A.G. McCall and his wife *Zolute* took keen interest in developing cotton handloom industry in the Lushai Hills. The cottage industry also known as the Reid House in Aizawl gave utmost efforts to develop the skills of the local weavers and artists and enhance the handloom products. It successfully led to export of Lushai processed cotton outside the district such as Shillong, Cachar, Calcutta, Bombay and Delhi. This is remarkable epoch in the history of colonial Lushai Hills. The Reid House had achieved its objective in the socio-economic life of the Lushai people and was able to ensure 'a second cash string to its bow' if the rice crop failed. It became a reliable insurance or back-up to rice economy. It also led to social recognition of the status of women and their role in the household economy, apart from the traditional skills of the Lushais in cotton handlooms to safeguard their economic survival. The cottage industries had prevented the recurrence of Kelkang-like movement among the Lushais and taught them the importance of commerce in uplifting their economic standards in the face of modern social and economic transitions around the world.

However, the weavers' bliss was short-lived. The handloom industries in the Lushai hills was gravely devastated by the World War I and the consequent statutory orders passed against the cotton and yarn manufacture and trade (apart from other essential items) in India. The Order had choked the free flow and manufacture of cloths and yarns in the Lushai hills. It led to the disintegration of the Lushai cottages and their business enterprises. Licence and control system had been applied on the manufacture and trade of

cotton and yarn. Prices and quantities of cloths or yarns had been fixed by the government which had directly affected the local handloom based cloth production in the Lushai hills. Statutory terms such as 'Control Puan' or 'Control Cloths' that were never heard before in the hills, became the keywords in cotton markets. This state's grip on the flow of goods and marketplaces in Lushai hills deteriorated the principle of free market and entrepreneurship. The British government put control on enterprise for war-time emergency. But independent India, after the British left, made this law permanent instead of abolishing it.

The Indian state, after Independence, somehow tried to revive the dying cottage industries by invoking the idea of Cooperatives, inspired by Robert Owen in the early nineteenth century-Britain. The Indian government began by co-opting the members of the then profitable Reid House, village chiefs and other Lushai entrepreneurs in the system of cooperation. The infant industry in Lushai hills run by risk-taking entrepreneurs was replaced by bureaucratic ones. The Statist controlled regime of Cotton and Yarn (Control) Order 1943 cut off the supply chain of cotton cloth and yarn that connected Lushai villages with Aizawl and the metropolitan markets. Without getting to the root of the problem the bureaucrats identified the decline in cotton trade as a problem of 'rural development' which they attempted to solve through government subsidy. However, the state agents failed to revitalise the Lushai handloom industries that flourished before the outbreak of the Second World War.

In the history of trade and marketplaces in the Lushai hills two important stages can be identified: (a) River-way market era, and (b) Road-way market era. Firstly, river-way markets functioned actively before the British conquest of the Lushai Hills. It signified the Anglo-Lushai contact era. Road-way market came after the end of river based markets. It signified colonial control era. Secondly, whereas river-way markets were kept under the control and safeguard of the Lushai chiefs, road-way bazaars were constructed by the British and controlled and protected by them. Third, trade items in river-way bazaars in the Lushai hills were mainly forest produces but the trade items in road-way markets were manufactured and finished goods. Lastly, river based bazaars were vulnerable to raids and inter-tribal or inter-chieftain conflicts. But road based bazaars were the important centres of government's establishment and had no chance for loots or raids. In river based market Lushai could still become a raider but in the road-way bazaars he had to trade only.

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PLATES

Plate 1: Present-day Sairang Vegetable Market (pic: Author, 2017)

Plate 2: Present-day Sairang Cloth Bazaar (pic: Author, 2017)

Plate 3: British Police Station's Lock-Up at Sairang (pic: Author, 2017)

Plate 4: Dispensary built by the British at Sairang (pic: Author, 2017)

Plate 5: Present-day Lushai Vendors ferrying agricultural produce by boat at *Tlawng* (Dhaleswari) River near Sairang (pic: Author, 2017)

Plate 6: Present-day Champhai Wet-Rice (*Leilet*) fields
(pic: https://allresourceupdates.wordpress.com/2013/06/21/north-east-india-mizoram/

Plate 7: North Vanlaiphai Wet-Rice (*Leilet*) field (present day)

Plate 8: *Sum*—Paddy husking tool (Souce: Mizoram State Museum)

Plate 9: *Herawt* —Cotton-ginning tool (Source: Mizoram State Museum, Aizawl)

Plate 10: *Lasai*—used for cleansing ginned cotton (Source: Mizoram State Museum, Aizawl)

Plate 11: *Hmui*—used for spinning cotton yarn (Source: Mizoram State Museum, Aizawl)

Plate 12: *Suhvel* — used for rolling yarn (Source: Mizoram State Museum, Aizawl)

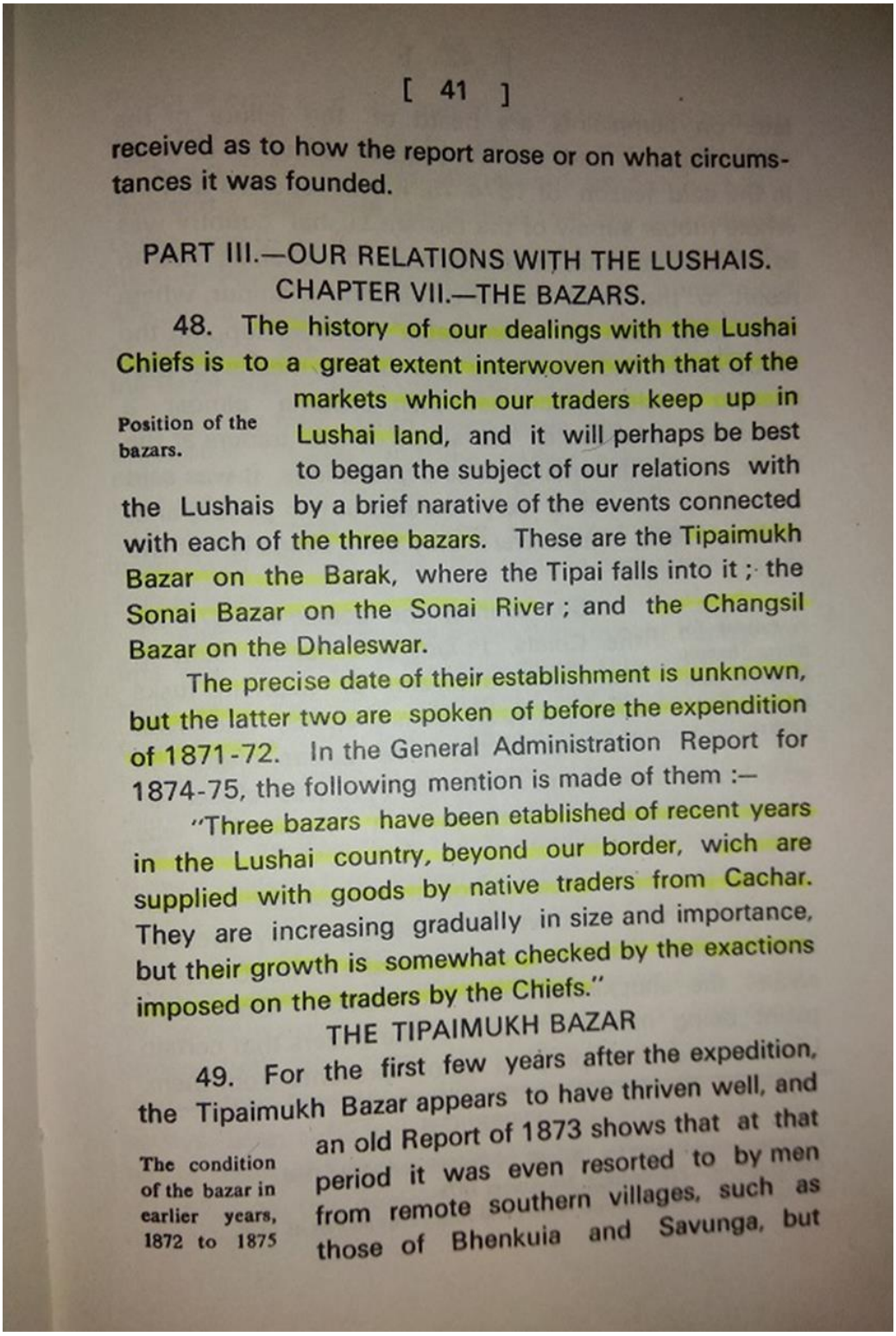
Plate 13: Lushai Rug made by weavers (Source: Mizoram State Museum, Aizawl)

Plate 14: Dyed Cotton Yarn (Source: Mizoram State Museum, Aizawl)

Plate 15: *Ipchete* (Small bags) made of cotton
(Source: Mizoram State Museum, Aizawl)

APPENDIX

A. Extracts from Primary Sources:



received as to how the report arose or on what circumstances it was founded.

PART III.—OUR RELATIONS WITH THE LUSHAIS.

CHAPTER VII.—THE BAZARS.

48. The history of our dealings with the Lushai Chiefs is to a great extent interwoven with that of the markets which our traders keep up in Lushai land, and it will perhaps be best to began the subject of our relations with the Lushais by a brief narative of the events connected with each of the three bazars. These are the Tipaimukh Bazar on the Barak, where the Tipai falls into it ; the Sonai Bazar on the Sonai River ; and the Changsil Bazar on the Dhaleswar.

Position of the bazars.

The precise date of their establishment is unknown, but the latter two are spoken of before the expendition of 1871-72. In the General Administration Report for 1874-75, the following mention is made of them :—

"Three bazars have been etablished of recent years in the Lushai country, beyond our border, wich are supplied with goods by native traders from Cachar. They are increasing gradually in size and importance, but their growth is somewhat checked by the exactions imposed on the traders by the Chiefs."

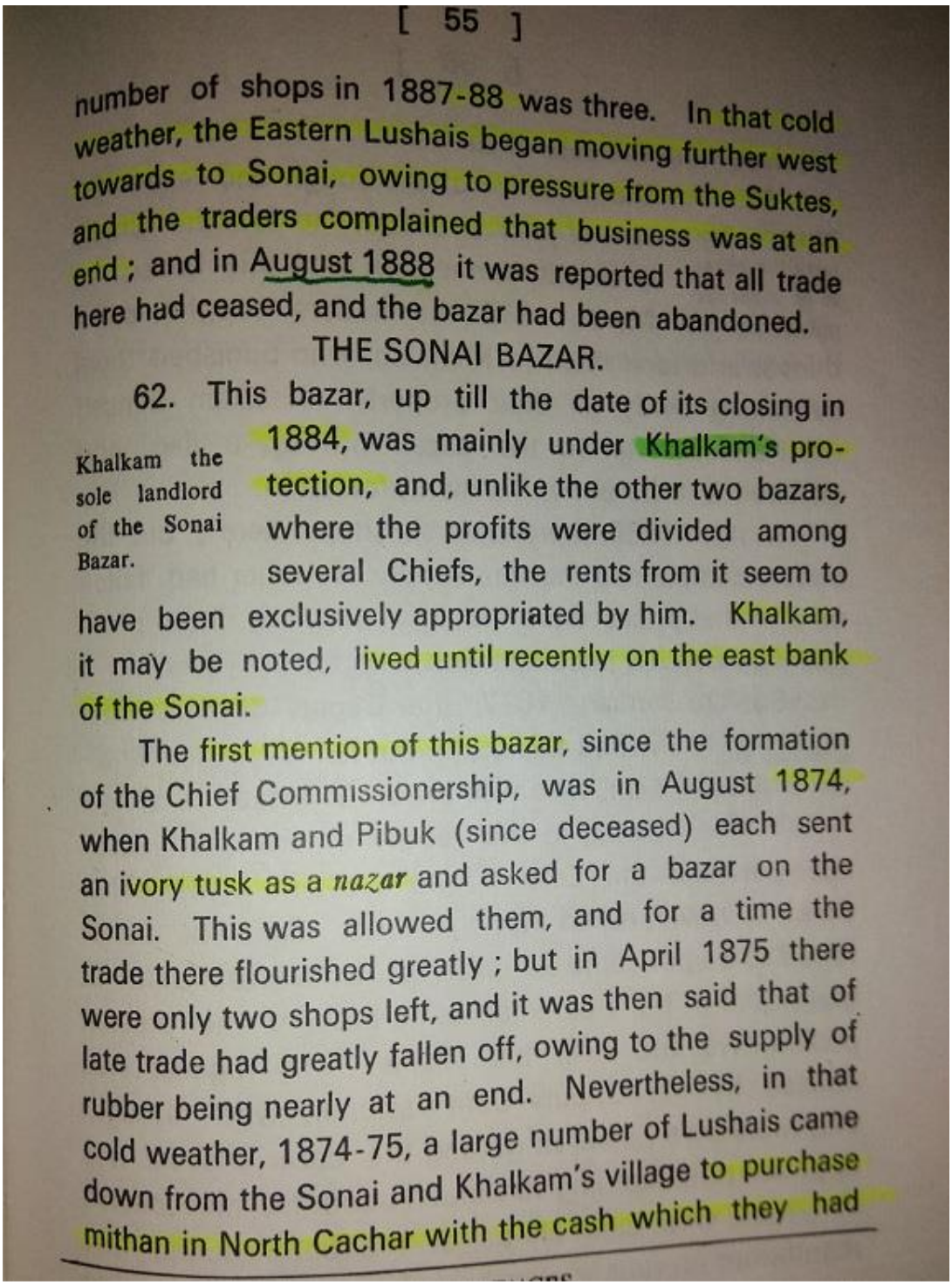
THE TIPAIMUKH BAZAR

49. For the first few years after the expedition, the Tipaimukh Bazar appears to have thriven well, and an old Report of 1873 shows that at that period it was even resorted to by men from remote southern villages, such as those of Bhenkuia and Savunga, but

The condition of the bazar in earlier years, 1872 to 1875

Extract 1: Tipaimukh Bazaar

(Source: *The Lushais 1878-1889*, Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute, 2008, p.41).



[55]

number of shops in 1887-88 was three. In that cold weather, the Eastern Lushais began moving further west towards to Sonai, owing to pressure from the Suktes, and the traders complained that business was at an end ; and in August 1888 it was reported that all trade here had ceased, and the bazar had been abandoned.

THE SONAI BAZAR.

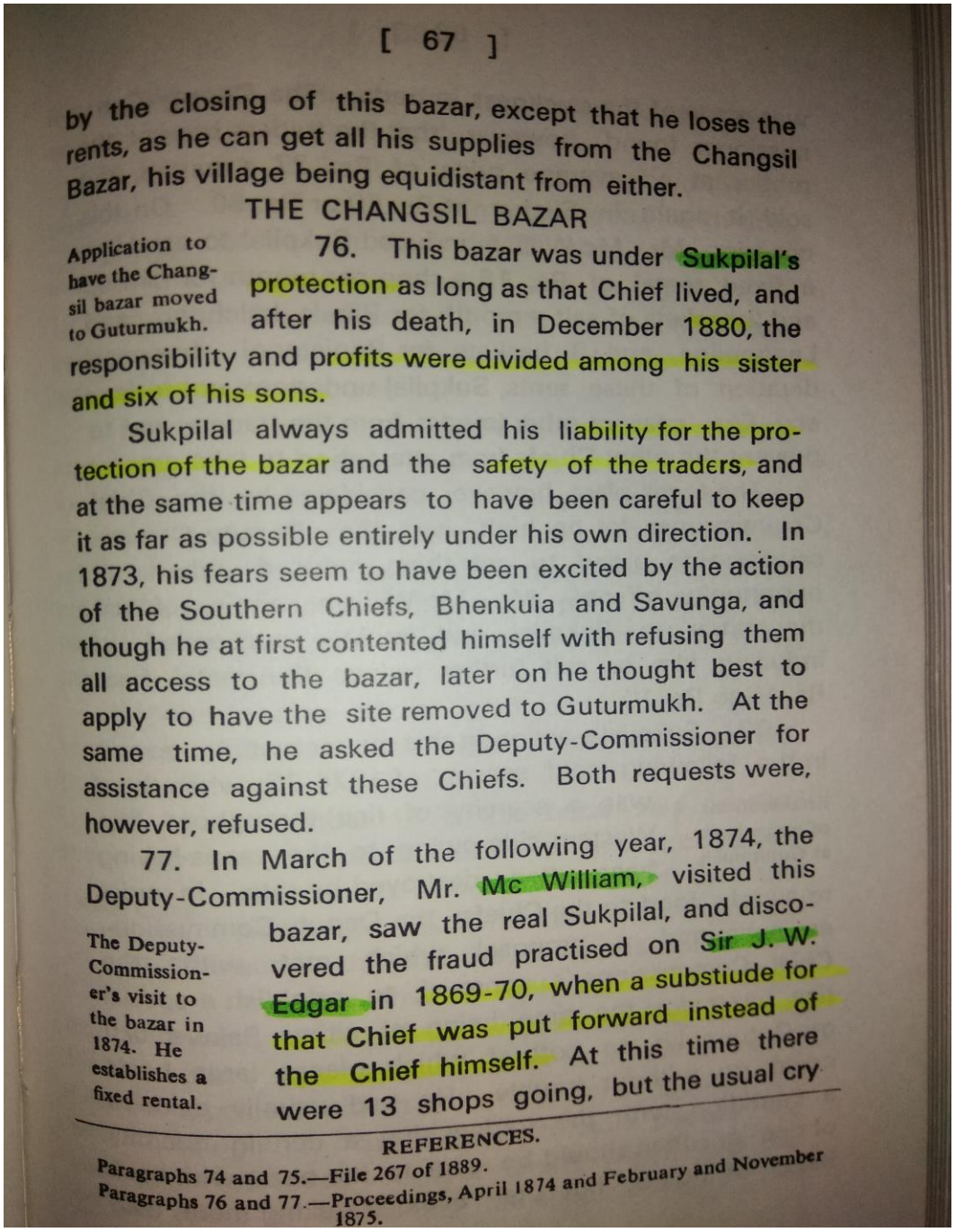
62. This bazar, up till the date of its closing in 1884, was mainly under Khalkam's protection, and, unlike the other two bazars, where the profits were divided among several Chiefs, the rents from it seem to have been exclusively appropriated by him. Khalkam, it may be noted, lived until recently on the east bank of the Sonai.

Khalkam the sole landlord of the Sonai Bazar.

The first mention of this bazar, since the formation of the Chief Commissionership, was in August 1874, when Khalkam and Pibuk (since deceased) each sent an ivory tusk as a *nazar* and asked for a bazar on the Sonai. This was allowed them, and for a time the trade there flourished greatly ; but in April 1875 there were only two shops left, and it was then said that of late trade had greatly fallen off, owing to the supply of rubber being nearly at an end. Nevertheless, in that cold weather, 1874-75, a large number of Lushais came down from the Sonai and Khalkam's village to purchase mithan in North Cachar with the cash which they had

Extract 2: Sonai Bazaar

(Source: *The Lushais 1878-1889*, Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute, 2008, p.55)



by the closing of this bazar, except that he loses the rents, as he can get all his supplies from the Changsil Bazar, his village being equidistant from either.

THE CHANGSIL BAZAR

Application to have the Changsil bazar moved to Guturmukh.

76. This bazar was under Sukpilal's protection as long as that Chief lived, and after his death, in December 1880, the responsibility and profits were divided among his sister and six of his sons.

Sukpilal always admitted his liability for the protection of the bazar and the safety of the traders, and at the same time appears to have been careful to keep it as far as possible entirely under his own direction. In 1873, his fears seem to have been excited by the action of the Southern Chiefs, Bhenkuia and Savunga, and though he at first contented himself with refusing them all access to the bazar, later on he thought best to apply to have the site removed to Guturmukh. At the same time, he asked the Deputy-Commissioner for assistance against these Chiefs. Both requests were, however, refused.

The Deputy-Commissioner's visit to the bazar in 1874. He establishes a fixed rental.

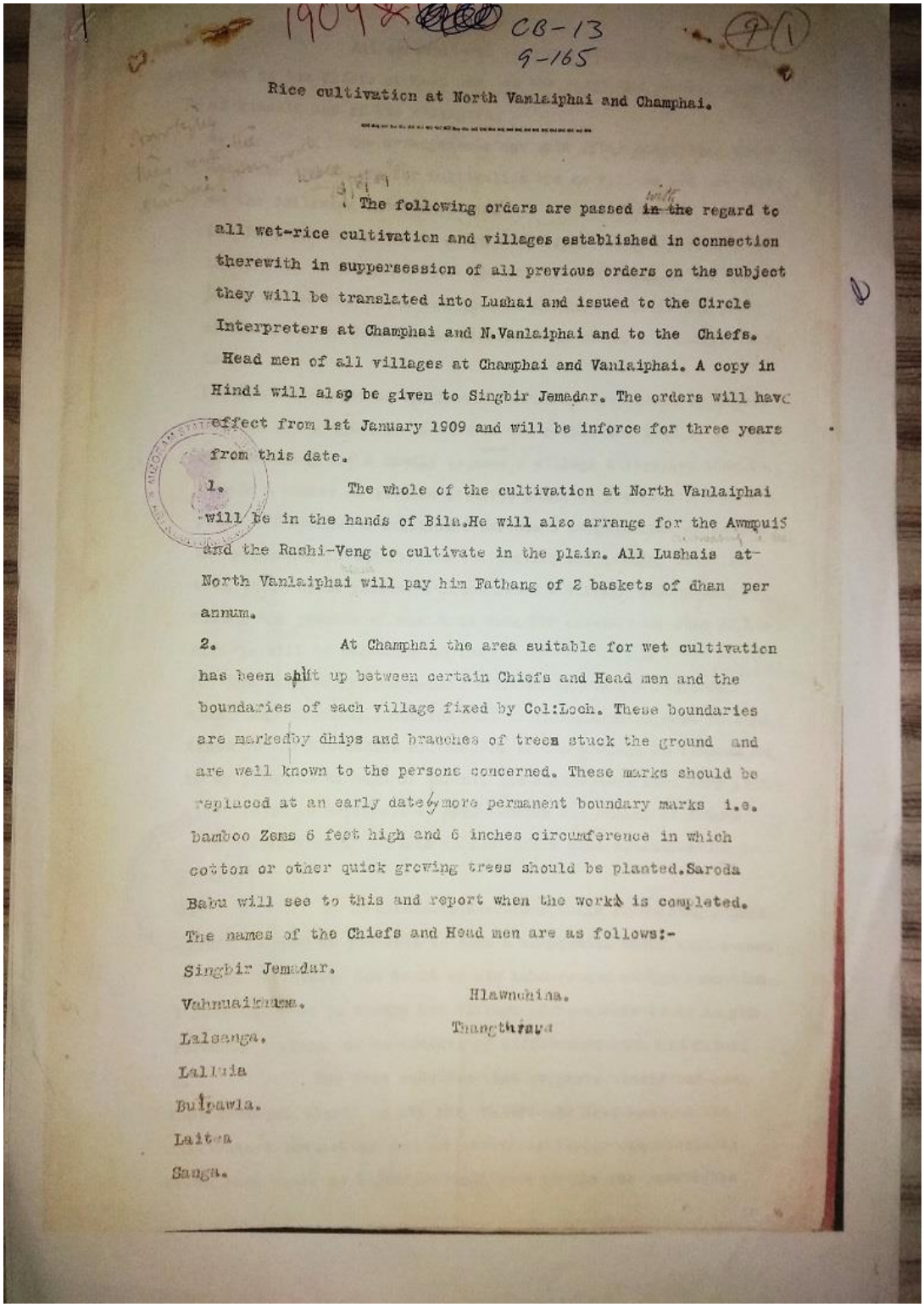
77. In March of the following year, 1874, the Deputy-Commissioner, Mr. Mc William, visited this bazar, saw the real Sukpilal, and discovered the fraud practised on Sir J. W. Edgar in 1869-70, when a substiude for that Chief was put forward instead of the Chief himself. At this time there were 13 shops going, but the usual cry

REFERENCES.

Paragraphs 74 and 75.—File 267 of 1889.
Paragraphs 76 and 77.—Proceedings, April 1874 and February and November 1875.

Extract 3: Changsil Bazaar

(Source: *The Lushais 1878-1889*, Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute, 2008, p.67)



1909 CB-13
9-165

Rice cultivation at North Vanlaiphai and Champhai.

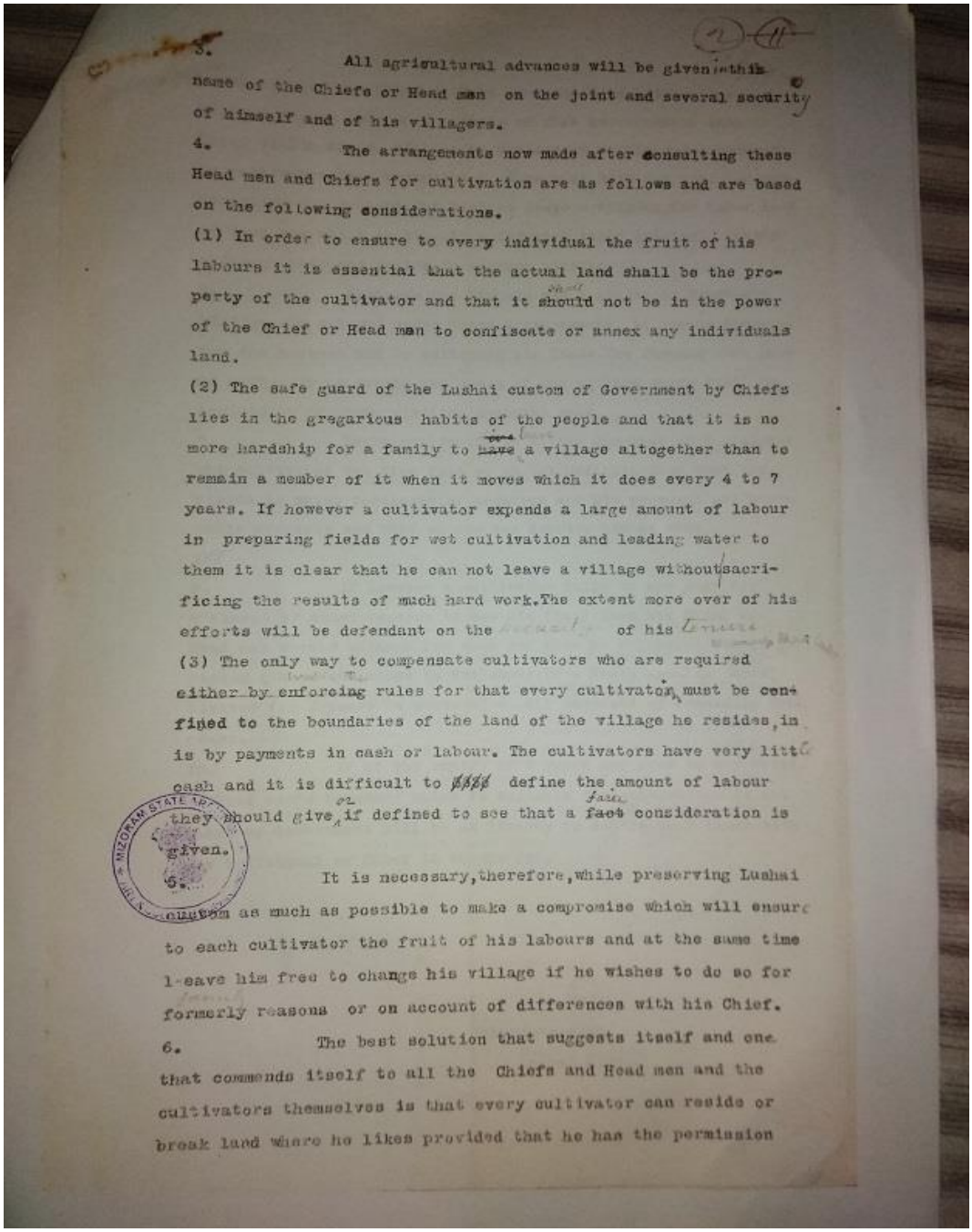
The following orders are passed ~~in the~~ with regard to all wet-rice cultivation and villages established in connection therewith in suppersession of all previous orders on the subject they will be translated into Lushai and issued to the Circle Interpreters at Champhai and N.Vanlaiphai and to the Chiefs. Head men of all villages at Champhai and Vanlaiphai. A copy in Hindi will alsp be given to Singbir Jemadar. The orders will have effect from 1st January 1909 and will be inforce for three years from this date.

1. The whole of the cultivation at North Vanlaiphai will be in the hands of Bila.He will also arrange for the Awmpuis and the Rashi-Veng to cultivate in the plain. All Lushais at North Vanlaiphai will pay him Fathang of 2 baskets of dhan per annum.

2. At Champhai the area suitable for wet cultivation has been split up between certain Chiefs and Head men and the boundaries of each village fixed by Col:Loch. These boundaries are markedby dhips and branches of trees stuck the ground and are well known to the persons concerned. These marks should be replaced at an early date by more permanent boundary marks i.e. bamboo Zeas 6 feet high and 6 inches circumference in which cotton or other quick growing trees should be planted.Saroda Babu will see to this and report when the work is completed. The names of the Chiefs and Head men are as follows:-

Singbir Jemadar.
Vahmuaikuma. Hlawnchina.
Lalsanga. Thangthiava
Lalluia
Bulpawla.
Laitea
Sanga.

Extract 4: Wet-Rice Cultivation in Champhai and North Vanlaiphai, 1909
(Source: MSA, Aizawl, G-165, CB-13)



3. All agricultural advances will be given in the name of the Chiefs or Head men on the joint and several security of himself and of his villagers.

4. The arrangements now made after consulting these Head men and Chiefs for cultivation are as follows and are based on the following considerations.

(1) In order to ensure to every individual the fruit of his labours it is essential that the actual land shall be the property of the cultivator and that it should not be in the power of the Chief or Head man to confiscate or annex any individuals land.

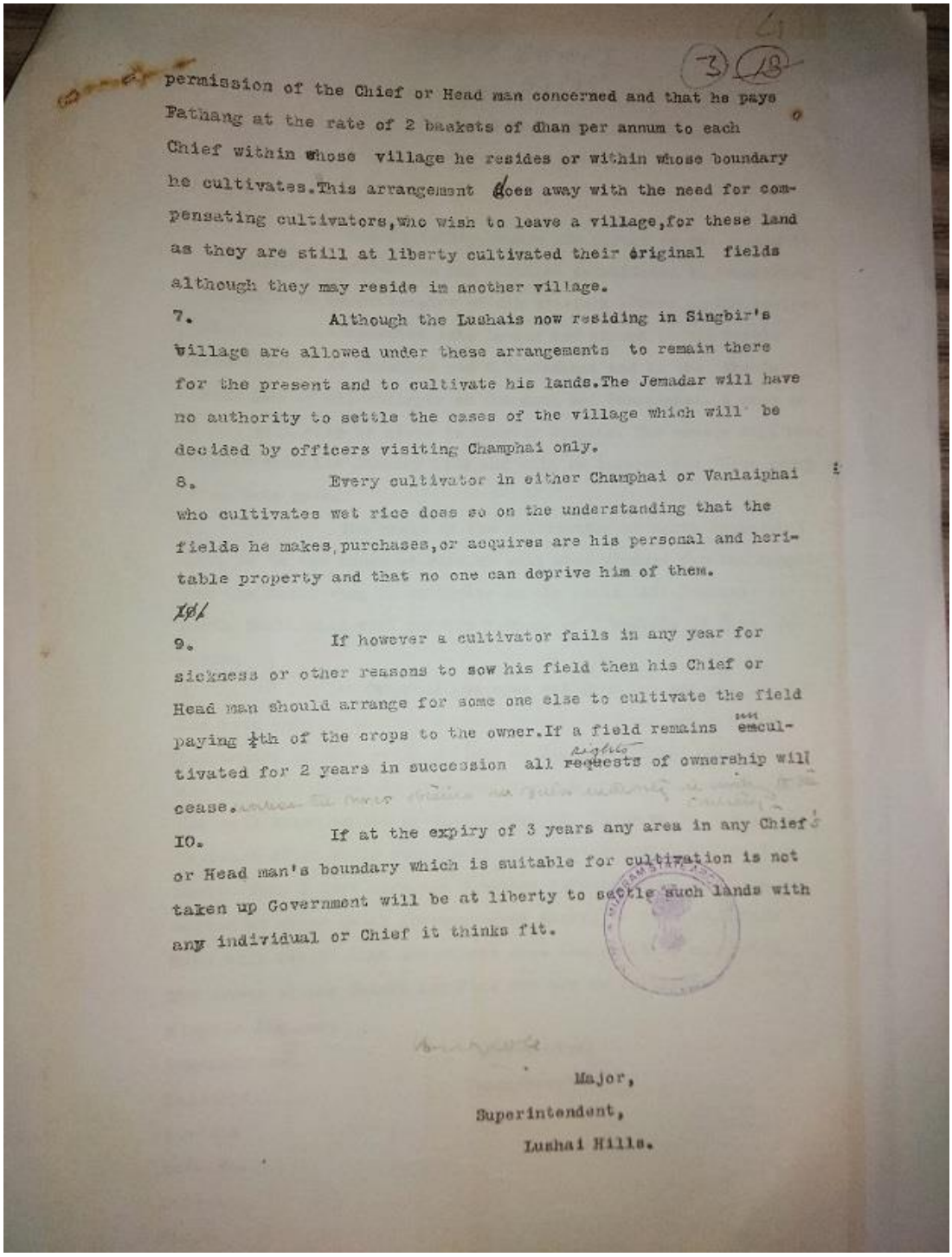
(2) The safe guard of the Lushai custom of Government by Chiefs lies in the gregarious habits of the people and that it is no more hardship for a family to ~~have~~ a village altogether than to remain a member of it when it moves which it does every 4 to 7 years. If however a cultivator expends a large amount of labour in preparing fields for wet cultivation and leading water to them it is clear that he can not leave a village without sacrificing the results of much hard work. The extent more over of his efforts will be defendant on the of his

(3) The only way to compensate cultivators who are required either by enforcing rules for that every cultivator must be confined to the boundaries of the land of the village he resides in is by payments in cash or labour. The cultivators have very litt cash and it is difficult to define the amount of labour they should give if defined to see that a fair consideration is given.

5. It is necessary, therefore, while preserving Lushai custom as much as possible to make a compromise which will ensure to each cultivator the fruit of his labours and at the same time leave him free to change his village if he wishes to do so for formerly reasons or on account of differences with his Chief.

6. The best solution that suggests itself and one that commends itself to all the Chiefs and Head men and the cultivators themselves is that every cultivator can reside or break land where he likes provided that he has the permission

Extract 5: Wet-Rice Cultivation in Champhai and North Vanlaiphai
(Source: MSA, Aizawl, G-165, CB-13)



permission of the Chief or Head man concerned and that he pays Pathang at the rate of 2 baskets of dhan per annum to each Chief within whose village he resides or within whose boundary he cultivates. This arrangement does away with the need for compensating cultivators, who wish to leave a village, for these land as they are still at liberty cultivated their original fields although they may reside in another village.

7. Although the Lushais now residing in Singbir's village are allowed under these arrangements to remain there for the present and to cultivate his lands. The Jemadar will have no authority to settle the cases of the village which will be decided by officers visiting Champhai only.

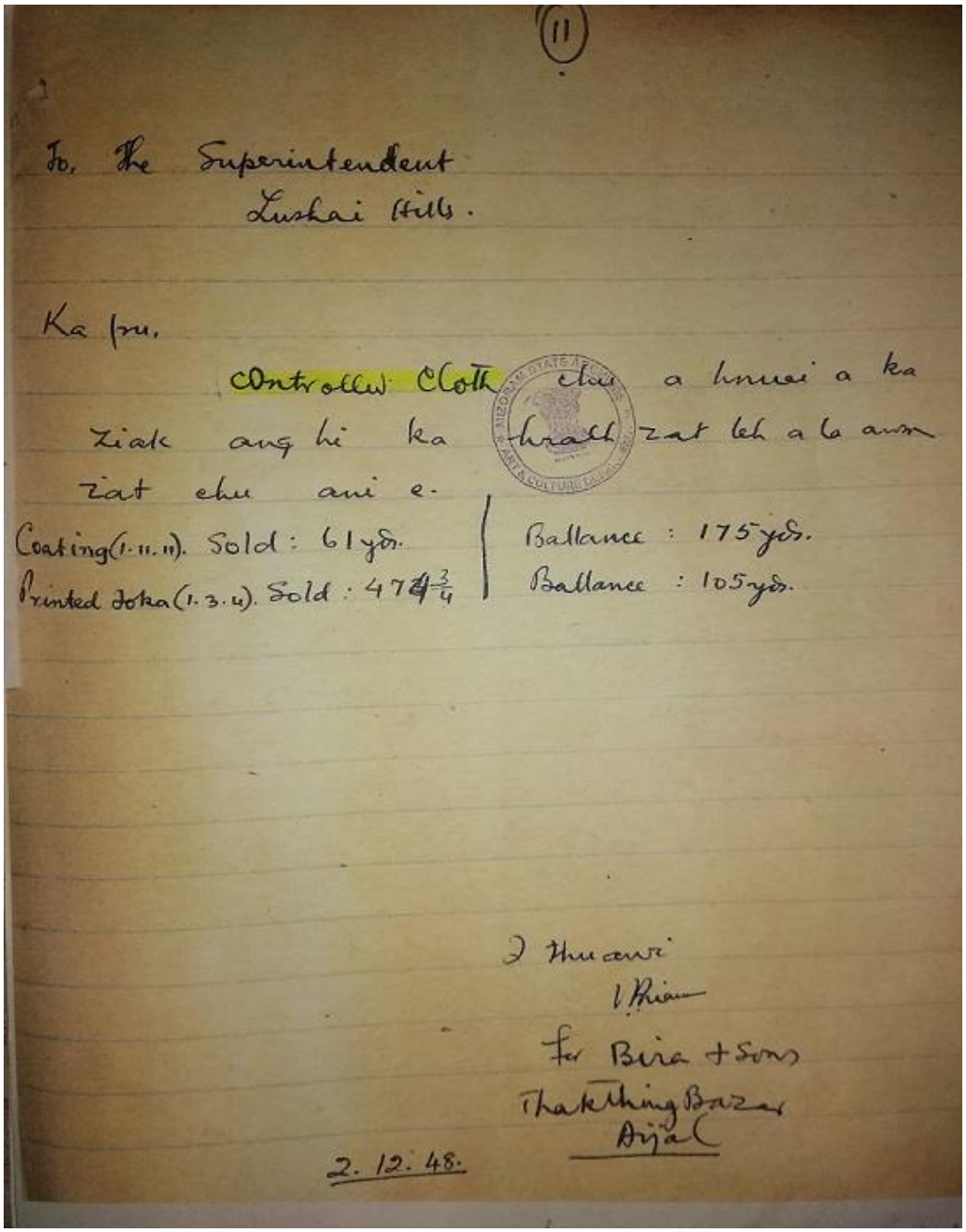
8. Every cultivator in either Champhai or Vanlaiphai who cultivates wet rice does so on the understanding that the fields he makes, purchases, or acquires are his personal and heritable property and that no one can deprive him of them.

9. If however a cultivator fails in any year for sickness or other reasons to sow his field then his Chief or Head man should arrange for some one else to cultivate the field paying ¼th of the crops to the owner. If a field remains uncultivated for 2 years in succession all rights of ownership will cease.

10. If at the expiry of 3 years any area in any Chief's or Head man's boundary which is suitable for cultivation is not taken up Government will be at liberty to settle such lands with any individual or Chief it thinks fit.

Major,
Superintendent,
Lushai Hills.

Extract 6: Wet-Rice Cultivation in Champhai and North Vanlaiphai
(Source: MSA, Aizawl, G-165, CB-13)



(11)

To, The Superintendent
Lushai Hills.

Ka hru,

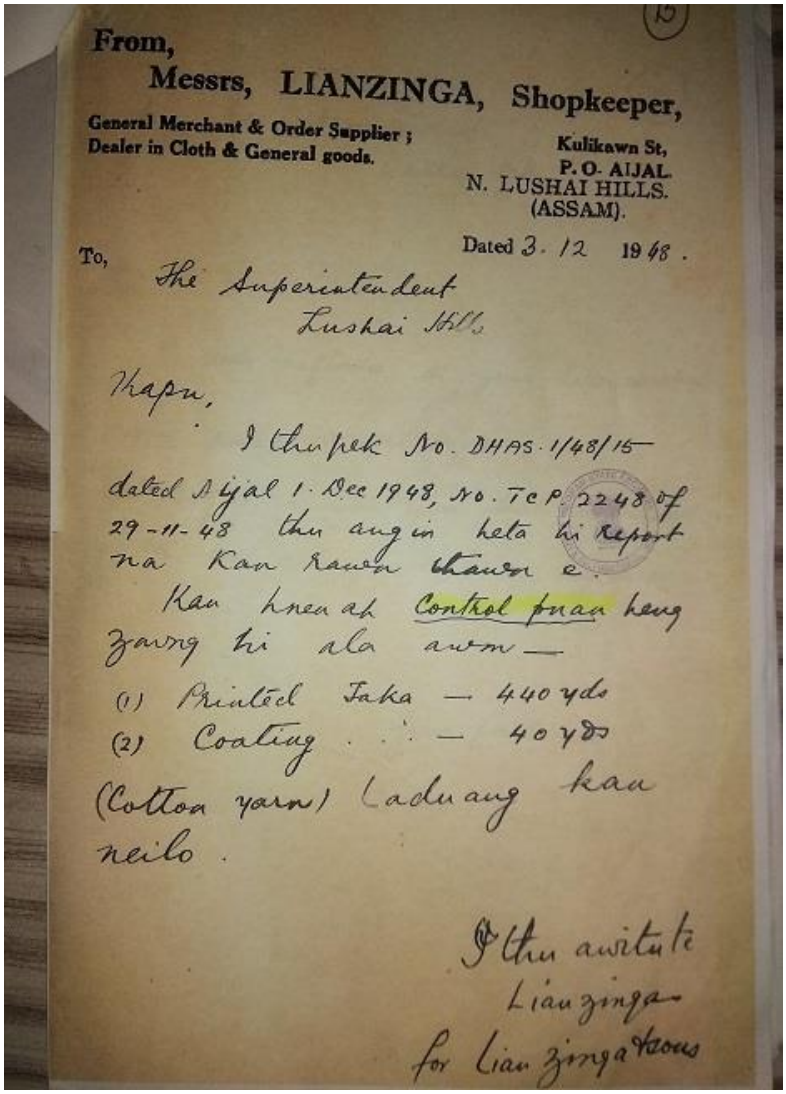
Controlled Cloth chu a hmuai a ka
ziak ang hi ka hralh zat leh a la awm
zat chu ani e.

Coating(1.11.11). Sold : 61 yds. | Ballance : 175 yds.
Printed Joka(1.3.4). Sold : 47¾ | Ballance : 105 yds.

J Thuamvi
I/Bian
for Bira & Sons
Thakthing Bazar
Aijal

2.12.48.

Extract 7: Declaration of 'Control Cloth' by shopkeeper, 1948
(Source: MSA, Aizawl, G-58, C.B-723)



From,
Messrs, LIANZINGA, Shopkeeper,
General Merchant & Order Supplier ;
Dealer in Cloth & General goods.
Kulikawn St,
P. O. AIJAL.
N. LUSHAI HILLS.
(ASSAM).

Dated 3. 12 1948.

To,
The Superintendent
Lushai Hills

Thapu,

I thupek No. DHAS. 1/48/15 dated Aijal 1 Dec 1948, No. TCP 2248 of 29-11-48 thu ang in heta hi report na kan rawn thawn e.

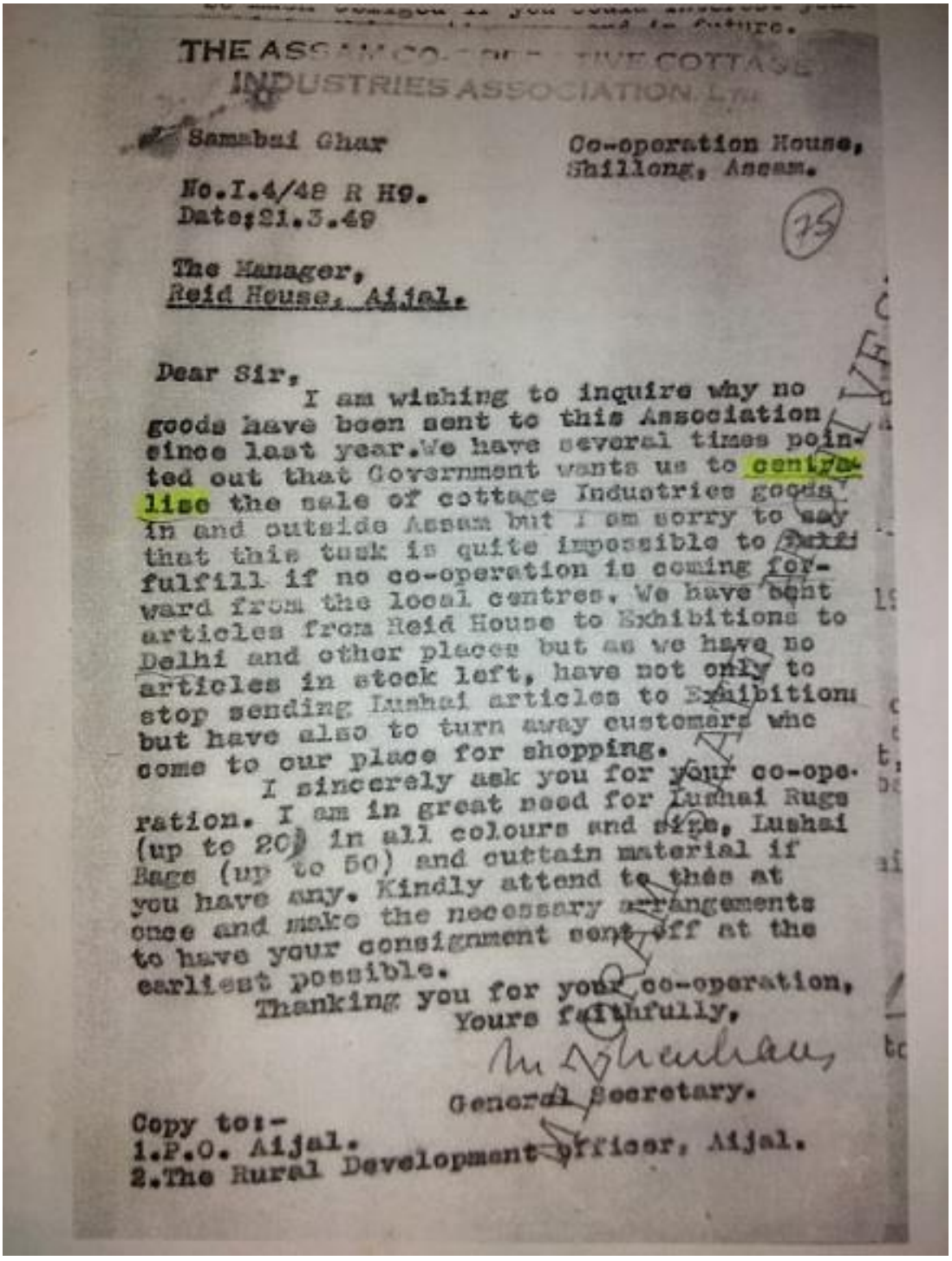
Kan hnenah Control puan heng zawng hi ala awm —

(1) Printed Taka — 440 yds
(2) Coating . . — 40 yds

(Cotton yarn) Laduang kau neilo.

I thu awituin
Lianzinga
for Lianzinga & sons

Extract 8: Declaration of Control Puan by Lianzinga, a shopkeeper in Aizawl, 1948
(Source: MSA, Aizawl, G-58, C.B-723)



THE ASSAM CO- - - TIVE COTTAGE
INDUSTRIES ASSOCIATION, Ltd.

Samabai Ghar

Co-operation House,
Shillong, Assam.

No.I.4/48 R HQ.
Date:21.3.49

75

The Manager,
Reid House, Aijal.

Dear Sir,

I am wishing to inquire why no goods have been sent to this Association since last year. We have several times pointed out that Government wants us to centralise the sale of cottage Industries goods in and outside Assam but I am sorry to say that this task is quite impossible to fulfill if no co-operation is coming forward from the local centres. We have sent articles from Reid House to Exhibitions to Delhi and other places but as we have no articles in stock left, have not only to stop sending Lushai articles to Exhibitions but have also to turn away customers who come to our place for shopping.

I sincerely ask you for your co-operation. I am in great need for Lushai Rugs (up to 20) in all colours and size, Lushai Bags (up to 50) and cuttain material if you have any. Kindly attend to thes at once and make the necessary arrangements to have your consignment sent off at the earliest possible.

Thanking you for your co-operation,

Yours faithfully,

General Secretary.

Copy to:-
1.P.O. Aijal.
2.The Rural Development Officer, Aijal.

Document 9: Demand for Lushai handloom products from Shillong Cooperation House
(Source: MSA, Aizawl, G-756, CB-61)